

*Iowa* ~~~~~  
*Pioneer Foundations*

George F. Parker



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## IOWA CENTENNIAL HISTORY

*Projected by the State Historical Society of Iowa and approved by the General Assembly, volumes of history commemorative of the establishment of the State of Iowa in 1846 are being compiled and published as rapidly as financial support permits.*



I dedicate to the memory of my father, Thomas W. Parker, and my mother, Eliza Ann Kirk, this study of a great movement in which it was their privilege to bear an active and true part. They knew its trials, partook of its pleasures, saw its large significance, and left to me, their only and grateful son, a supreme sense of obligation for their service to the world as typical representatives of the best traditions of the American Pioneer.

G. F. P.





# *Iowa* ~~~~~ *Pioneer Foundations*

By  
GEORGE F. PARKER

VOL. I



PUBLISHED AT IOWA CITY IOWA IN 1940 BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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## THIS BOOK

PERHAPS the most thorough and comprehensive work ever written and published on the Pioneer, this book along with volume two (which will follow soon) contributes to Iowa and American history the foundations upon which were builded the commonwealths of Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, as well as Iowa.

Of this great wheel of Midwestern States, Iowa is the hub. Here Pioneer life came to its final fruition. The period covered by the author (1830 to 1870) illustrates the movements, ideas, impulses, motives, activities, and achievements of the American Pioneer at their highest.

The author lived in Iowa many years. He was intimately acquainted with the Pioneers as of his own group of people. Accordingly his information came largely from his own personal experiences, observations, and conversations with scores of Pioneers. These pages are the result of a lifetime of observation and intense thinking.

Before the death of Mr. Parker in May, 1928, the manuscript for the two volumes was placed in the custody of the State Historical Society of Iowa with the request that it be published as written without additions or deletions. With the exception of a few changes in punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing, the work is printed as it came to the Society some years ago from the hands of the author.

## This Book

The original manuscript will be preserved among the collections of the State Historical Society at Iowa City.

There may be readers who do not agree with some of the statements made in the pages of this book. This would not be surprising since there are few if any readers who were eye witnesses of the life of the Pioneers (1830-1870) as covered by Mr. Parker who wrote from his own personal experiences. Since the editor could not discuss any points with the author, he has left practically all statements stand as they are found in the original manuscript.

The second volume on *Iowa Pioneer Foundations*, which is to be a continuation of this book, will deal with such subjects as The Social Structure; Woman's Position and Work; Internal Economy of the Family; Ways of Amusing Themselves; Pioneer Qualities and Customs; Sanitary Conditions; Language; Crime, Pauperism, and Drunkenness; The Pioneer's Ingrained Conservatism; Greatness a Relative Term; Some Philosophy of the Pioneer Life; and The Influence of the Civil War.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND EDITOR  
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
IOWA CITY IOWA

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

PERHAPS it may not be amiss to explain as briefly as I may, but as fully as I ought, how this study had its origin. A serious book, like an individual, an idea, or a human movement, has a beginning. Its seed is generated and sown in some motive; it sprouts in some soil, whether thin or fertile; and when, like a plant or an animal, it grows, it takes on a constantly changing character. If it assumes to have an idea behind it, it must take its chances in the struggle for existence as a contribution to literature; and yet, when finished, it means everything to the mind that has conceived and executed it. It may be a dream, but it is his own and as such it comes to be precious to him.

I hope this is true of my attempt to analyze, however imperfectly, the activities, the achievements, the shortcomings, the sufferings, and the character of the Pioneer. After I had quit the scenes among which my forebears had lived and worked, and in which it had been my pride to grow up, and had gone into the great world, I discovered a profound misunderstanding of the origin and the work of these unchronicled people, a strange idea that they were little more than rough, uncouth, and narrow adventurers lacking in the qualities that give beauty, coherence, strength, and consistency to organized human effort. This was accompanied by an underlying and almost irremovable doubt

## Pioneer Foundations

about their place as constructive forces in a great civilization. Wherever I went, whether in my own country or in Europe from which we had drawn our origins, I found this inability to comprehend the Western movement, this curious failure to know, or, what was often worse, an indifference in masses of active, well-meaning people. When I talked with casual acquaintances, or even with friends, I was questioned about details of the most obvious order, or was face to face with skepticism about the place in the world of such a population.

There were many reasons for this, among which that patronage of the new and strange which, like the same quality when applied to the young, was most prominent. Then remoteness, lack of interest, and narrow selfishness were obvious reasons. But it soon became clear that, to use Dr. Johnson's brutal phrase about himself, the prevalence of this sentiment was mostly due to "pure ignorance". As a young and humble writer who had only recently come out of the West, assuming to instruct the public, called upon to answer questions, to discuss problems affecting many neighborhoods, along the line of the Pioneer march, as well as the rest of the country and the world, I had, in due course, to deal with many features in this strange life then even more than now so little known.

It must have been in 1884 that one night I had to write an editorial dealing with the origin of the people of one or two of the States of the Middle West. To all seeming, it had long before become a settled conclusion, growing out of the way history had been written, that everything

## Author's Preface

everywhere had come out of New England. With no prejudices or prepossessions, I had drifted unquestioningly into the popular current on this subject. In this particular case, I had occasion to look, in more than a casual way, into an old report of the United States census — that of 1850.

As a result, my short article gave a fair idea of the eclectic sources from which the population in question had been drawn. My attention was, perhaps, turned in this direction by a suggestion once made by a friend, Samuel J. Randall, then Speaker of the National House of Representatives, when discussing in conversation the straits to which a writer is sometimes reduced for proper subjects for study and writing. "If", he said, "you ever find yourself in this plight take up any census report upon which you can lay hands and, in any division of it, you will discover a wealth of illustration of many questions of the highest import . . . You will find it a fruitful source of study, and its power of suggestion will never fail you."

Out of this advice came the impulse which has produced this book. I began to dig down into the figures buried in these recurring, but neglected, decennial records of growth, with the result that the origins of the Pioneer, once lodged in my mind, never left it. After the need for editorial material passed, I continued my researches with greater system, so that within a few years I had gathered and assimilated a body of facts which had grown up around the dry skeleton of statistics with which I had started. Like

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the scientist who finds in a quarry a skull, or a jaw-bone, or some other part of an ancient animal or man, I seemed, somehow, to have obtained a new conception of the life out of which I and the people of my day had grown.

I still had no idea of using this material in a literary way mainly, perhaps, because writing was not the main concern of my life nor the outlet of my intellectual activities, but also for the further reason that I did not see any demand for this order of information or knowledge. But, as the making of notes which was never intermitted, went on, I found that they constantly grew in volume and, as it seemed to me, in importance and value.

By this time more than a quarter of a century had passed since the idea had come to me, and I thought that even in the face of the hard work incident to life I ought to do something with these awkward accumulations. Even then I had no ideas or plans beyond some modest monograph, a newspaper or magazine article of local interest in the small neighborhood in which I had passed my early years in the hard manual labor of an Iowa farm. As I wrote on, the whole subject began to unfold itself, and with this as a text I found that if I was to make any use of my studies, if my ideas were to have any value, I must no longer limit their application to a county or a State but must deal, in a formal way, with the like-minded and like-charactered men and women who had so peopled ten great States that they had grown in industry, social culture, and enterprise until they included nearly forty millions of an active as well as varied population living in these new scenes.



## Author's Preface

These few words explain as concisely as I can the motive which has produced a study, as honest as I could make it, of a development wholly unlike any other in modern life, destined to exercise an influence of the most far-reaching order. It is not a chronicle; and it is as remote as can be from formal history; but I send it out into the pulsating intellectual currents of the world in the hope that it may explain, in a modest way, something of the philosophy of a great human movement and give to those who may be interested an impulse to go further in the study of origins.

This study, then, if it has any merits, is the product, first, of a desire to know how a given human development was made, and then of a still stronger desire to tell its story to the thinking people of my own time and country. If it has faults and weaknesses (and they are here in plenty), it is still based upon the firm belief that I had something worth the telling, something that showed how plain, honest, and unpretentious people, moving and operating upon their own initiative, had done a commanding work at just the right time and in the right place. I have believed that this record of achievement was needed in the present crisis in human affairs. It seems to me that every example of courage, intelligence, and high aim wherever it may be found in the work of mankind should be recalled in order to strengthen anew the moral fibre when most needed.

I know what my own motives have been : I only wish I could feel that my power to illustrate human purposes may have been equal to the task that I have followed for

## Pioneer Foundations

so many years. So, I send forth my book in all honesty and sincerity as an outline record of something done in the world that was worth the doing.

GEORGE F. PARKER

*INTRODUCTION*



*PURPOSE DEFINED*

It is not my purpose to write a history of the West in the making; but, avoiding either the monograph or the formal chronicle, I hope that room may be found for a study dealing with the origin, motives, activities, difficulties, failures, and successes of the Pioneer. I am more concerned to examine this grim, sad figure as a human being in the chance of discovering some of the primary elements in his philosophy, than to reach a definite verdict about him as an historic entity. In doing this I shall emphasize his qualities as well as his achievements: what he was or became.

While such a study must relate itself in some degree to geography and physical surroundings, I shall make natural resources, scenery, and obvious facts subsidiary to the record of what the Pioneer has been. I shall remember that in studying this question from the point of view of a part it must be treated as the result of a general movement culminating after nearly three hundred years: not as an independent force in itself. In no other way is it possible to peer through the narrow vista of American settlement during the long period.

In general, I expect to limit myself to the period lying between 1830 and 1870. For this there are many reasons. At its opening the narrow area (Iowa) used for illustration

## Pioneer Foundations

was still in leash to the general government. Its initial settlement was three years distant, while sixteen years were to pass before it was admitted into the Union as a State with the dignity and responsibility which, throughout American history, have accompanied political development. The first date in our history which affords a clear view of the general shifting of population that had preceded it is 1850; while 1870 ends one epoch and begins another. The forty year period is divided by the Civil War so that its close challenges both comparison and contrast in relation to the simpler conditions that marked its opening.

### *GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS DEFINED*

IN order that the reader, following the long, complicated story of a hundred years of settlement and social growth, may find his way about, I ought to say that it deals with conditions in the Pioneer region or area included, both in the order of settlement and admission as States in the Federal Union, of the people and the territory within Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Minnesota, as a corner in the great irregular quadrilateral, came in too late to command more than inclusion as part of the great scheme of settlement and is not therefore embodied in tables of area or population except in the summing up or closing conditions.

I have used Iowa as the hub of the big wheel. It was last in point of time; but in my case there is the further reason that I knew it from the early days of childhood. It illustrates the common origin of the people in the com-

## Geographical Limits Defined

ponent parts of the region. It was settled under the conditions as to transportation, industry, government, religion, education, and social surroundings that had marked all its predecessors in the geographical area under study. It is, thus, more than typical : a real part of that characteristic thing known to history as the West. All the various communities of this half a million of square miles passed, like children of the same parents, through the same general conditions, and like a family they came out with the common features, varied again, as in the family, by individual traits and peculiarities.

I am convinced, not only by knowledge of these facts and from personal association but by study and observation, that this minor district faithfully reflects the whole as set forth and analyzed herein. Each of the consolidated Pioneer communities passed through equivalent experiences and all were composed of the same kind of men, drawn directly or remotely from the same sources, who had like contests with nature or savage and were devoted to the same political ideas. They passed through about the same religious experiences, developed their educational and social facilities under the same impulses and necessities, and suffered equally from like hardships. Thus Iowa becomes inclusive, illustrating a universal body of political and economic faith and practice over a large area. To me, whether as an individual or a student, it is the most interesting experiment in history because every movement, idea, activity, impulse, motive, and achievement is known and stands out with the distinctness of a cameo. These characteristics have

## Pioneer Foundations

made this record of it the most enjoyable work of a not inactive life.

Thus, while my text lies imbedded in the forty year period and within a small primary area, the resulting story covers, panorama like, the whole of the Pioneer life which was so uniform in the origin and character of the population involved; in the methods of transportation and settlement; in its religious forms and manifestations; in the motives, both real and professed; and in the methods of conquering nature that I could not limit its application to temporary or local conditions.

To the best of my knowledge, whether acquired by association or study, I have set forth the facts and philosophy behind the great movement which within so short a time has made a wilderness into a cultivated region where nearly forty millions of industrious and progressive people have homes, created by themselves, without help from government and with all the privileges that freedom can confer. I am content to believe that such a work, however imperfectly done, was worth the effort involved.

### CONDITIONS INVOLVED

I HAVE written — with a sympathy not remote from partisanship — from the long-held desire to pay my tribute to the work of the Pioneers. Having shared some of their experiences, known still more, and studied all, opportunity was afforded me to see what these people were in their every fibre. There has been no element or form of this type with which I have not been familiar, and none that



## Absence of Idealization

I have not wanted to know and understand still better. Feeling strongly that nothing was needed but the truth about the sad but formative life which lay at the foundation in a new region — itself the key to new conditions, new hopes, new promises, and new outlooks for humanity — I resented the tendency to forget the simplicity of beginnings, the hard surroundings and plain ways of unpretending people.

I know only too well how a large number even of their descendants, though profiting from their labors, often pay them little more than the tribute of neglect or oversight, sometimes that of a jeer or a pleasantry. There are writers who, puffed up by a scanty seeming success, lament the ignorance of their predecessors while showing their own. But before me in the later days of a long and happy life these people stand in both their strength and their weakness as human beings, men and women doing their duty as God gave them to see it. Apart from my own personal knowledge of them, with the attachment which every individual should have to early associations, to the beginnings where pleasures always overbalance pains, I have sought to cultivate such sympathy with them and their time as really to feel what they were and what they tried to do, and wherein they have either succeeded or fallen short in a trying environment.

### ABSENCE OF IDEALIZATION

WITH these sympathies I have neither idealized nor enmeshed these people in an awful myth like that under

## Pioneer Foundations

which the memory of such a man as Lincoln struggles. Like all men, under all circumstances, they were the creatures of their time: the inheritors of certain ideas and institutions which they sought to preserve and improve. I have declined to exaggerate these things because they are little more than formulas which are always subject to change or abandonment when they no longer fit into conditions that change as men who find themselves in strange physical surroundings or in a vigorous struggle with novel problems which have to be solved in the light of new factors or new situations.

I have not felt that I was studying the vestryism with which this century-long growth is often confused. It seems to me neither fortuitous nor narrow, but something with that capaciousness of plan and purpose inseparable from large human movements, never more in evidence than in this one. Dealing thus with the labors and achievements of men who have only recently played their parts and passed away; recalling, often with the emphasis of truth, departed customs and manners, dead hopes and ideals; with full recognition of the fact that they were, figuratively, the stepping-stones that enabled them to cross to a larger, though never to a more serious, existence, I have not felt that they were devoid of weaknesses or faults. Without them our modern life with all its boasted progress could no more have come into being than a coral island could have been built until untold myriads of insects had sacrificed themselves long before the structure, in all its beauty, was to be completed.

## Difficulties and Obligations

### *DIFFICULTIES AND OBLIGATIONS*

It would be impossible in such a work to set forth in any adequate way the obligations to others. They lie all along the line of an active, inquiring life. It was an early aspiration of mine to know the people who lived about me : the makers of this West of mine. It seemed to me that if I could fairly understand them it would be easier to learn something about the great outside world from which they were drawn, of which I knew so little and into which I was to plunge.

Thus, from the first I cast my net into all the waters found in the seemingly restricted life about me. This led to a study of all the kinds of people with whom I came into relations and gave me a knowledge that, in spite of the varied methods incident to its acquisition, soon became almost intuitive. It was increased and confirmed by the study of personal or type traits and by an insatiable curiosity to learn what I could about origins, industry, education, religion, social customs, and general characteristics. I found that I was interested in many out-of-the-way ideas and conditions and had a desire so to dovetail them into each other that they might leave upon my mind fairly permanent and solid impressions. I discovered that this curious result was confirmed by a study of the fugitive material available, so that the whole was thus photographed upon a somewhat retentive memory and finally arranged itself around what seemed to be a principle.

I submit with more diffidence than I ever before felt this study covering, in its incidence, a hundred-year phase of

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our history. Nobody can tell me how deficient it is : I know how remote it is from what I have felt and from what ought to be told about the Pioneer. And yet, no estimate thus far attempted has seemed to me more necessary if a beginning is to be made in interpreting this character. In the rush and hurly-burly of the indefinite thing called modern progress, the Pioneer is so little known, that he has been accorded so small a share of the credit which creative work deserves that I have been impatient to send forth, while yet there was time, my estimate of a great American type.

I can only lament that as a work of art it is not many times better than I have been able to make it. The day may come when it will be recognized that there lie hidden in the Pioneer the materials for the epic or for original studies of human nature as it operated in strange scenes. If my study has any pertinence or value it will not be found in bare facts but in the attempt so to inform human happenings with something of the spirit of those times as to lead the reader to go further in order that he may attain for himself a fair comprehension of the philosophy of the period dealt with.

### *EXPECTED ABSENCE OF UNDERSTANDING*

I RECOGNIZE, I think, the temerity of a native writer when he attempts to estimate the whole or any part of his own countrymen during the period that has lain about him or his immediate forebears — a function generally left to the foreign student. Other than the writing of formal history

## Expected Absence of Understanding

(itself in a new society a difficult and delicate operation) any task involving criticism, even in the highest meaning of that word, of his own people is never a grateful one. This is why so few students attempt it, preferring instead to write monographs on a small scale or chronicles on a large one. There is danger in the constant tilting against prejudices and prepossessions; in the contact with many persons who, although they may never have given a moment's thought to the matters presented, are still convinced that their province is universal; in the assumption by still others that a given conclusion cannot be true because it runs counter to their own impressions, or prejudices, or assumptions; and, worst of all, in the Pharisees of patriotism who resent, with a shrug, anything that seems to imply other than a compliment to their smug ideas.\*

Without either desire or intention to be ungracious, I must confess that I dare not hope that this study will appeal to those in whom the mawkish sentimental overlays the practical and the historical; to those who believe that the assertion of an impossible equality is the last word; to those with whom opportunism is a religion; to the people, who, without faith themselves, cannot understand its existence in others; to those descendants who have never paid

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\* A mere accumulation of facts and records can as little, without interpretation, give a true impression of the life, the spirit, and the thought of a past age as a drawer full of dried and unmounted skins, could give an impression of the life of birds in the air, on the earth, or on the water. — Sir Edward Grey introducing Lord Haldane's *Lecture on Truth in History*. 1916.

## Pioneer Foundations

to their pioneer ancestors even the tribute of inquiry, to say nothing of understanding, and have made no effort to imitate their virtues; to those who, constantly straining after something deemed new, affect to be progressive without knowing or caring that their crude notions are not founded upon knowledge, human nature, or experience; nor to those who believe that all the past is bad merely because dealing with a bygone time, they can no more live in than they can understand it.

### PERSONAL SURROUNDINGS

A word may be hazarded about my own association with the West. My grandmother (as in so many other cases, the homely figure about the grey mare has always illustrated my family's way through the world) born a Pioneer in Virginia and transplanted into Ohio and Indiana, entered the Three River Country of Iowa in 1849 as a settler in a county with perhaps six hundred people.

Five years later I was carried by my father into the same neighborhood. I was thus privileged, as a very young child, to begin life (under the auspices and traditions of the Pioneer) a hundred and sixty miles from a railroad. I shared the common hardships and pleasures that lie beyond the understanding of those who have not actually known them; the simple games and sports appealed to boyish activity; I suffered from the meagerness of the educational equipment of the time while gratefully using it; wrought in the primitive industries; noted, year by year, both the material prosperity and the growth of culture and refinement; knew

## Personal Surroundings

and loved its people; revered its simple institutions; and did not leave it for pleasure or business, or for periods, long or short, until long after the end of the period chosen for treatment.

I am thus imbued with the ideas, ambitions, and pride of the sturdy Pioneers of four generations in six States. I have loved Iowa and its people and the West of which I am so essentially a part. So, if I shall not affect that judicial coldness, sometimes as a recurring literary fashion, I fear that I am too hardened to apologize for enthusiasm over the wholesome development I was permitted to see and know. I was privileged to grow up with a young State; and, near or distant, present or absent, the association fills me with real pride. I shall not, however, deem it my duty to flatter the vanity of its people. There is a seamy side to a new community which the chronicler, writing for his neighbors may try to hide, but which the student may not overlook. Pioneer conditions were not free from fault or weakness, just as those of the present on the same scenes demand a rigid study of the graces and the higher moralities.

I shall avoid the egotism of a personal memoir; but as the direct inheritor of a hundred and fifty years of the traditions of the Pioneer I hope to describe and to estimate them fairly. This will lead me to deal with conditions which, though no longer dominant, were typical of the course of settlement from the days when men and women, taking with them what they had, mostly themselves, and throwing in all they might become, plunged into the wilderness to create homes. They carried our ideas and institu-

## Pioneer Foundations

tions into remote regions which, as they expanded into States, became the integers of a nation. These men knew little about the art of telling how things were done or ought to be done : with such gifts and opportunities as they had they could only do their best.

### *DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED*

CONTEMPORARY life has always tended in each generation, in this country, to run in narrow ruts. There is general recognition of the fact that, although knowledge of the thirty to fifty years before a given generation comes upon the scene, has a value greater than that of even longer periods among their predecessors : they are always less known than times more remote. Occasionally, a revived interest attaches to men of a previous half century, or to the trend of their period; but population and material resources increase so rapidly that abnormal processes have developed and interest cannot be maintained. It follows that the length of a generation is so reduced that men still fairly young find the events of thirty, twenty, even ten years before, almost overlaid by the activities and interests of their bustling present. The result is that just when the need for them is most pressing the older lessons are forgotten or unheeded.

This absence of interest is emphasized by the fact that modern conditions do not encourage strong men to forge to the front and leave a furrow visible to their successors. However much any time may be vaunted, no generation, country, State, or community, which does not produce an



## Seeming Remoteness

orderly succession of men with an outstanding personality and then, by giving them their larger work, hold them to responsibility, can hope to influence history or to have an abiding interest even for its successors on the same scenes. Whatever noise mediocrity may make, it neither survives nor commands respect after its representatives have passed away.

Applying this formula to our own days, it is not quite certain that the popular mind discriminates between the conflicting tendencies in our earlier history, where, everything being new and raw, men could not be merely commonplace and live at all, and those of later days when wealth and education, with their veneer of culture, often thinly spread, have developed from the momentum already generated. Because these earlier men had few or no books, many living persons cannot believe that they had inherent ability or interest in knowledge. The fact that in 1860 there were probably not a half dozen set bath tubs in Iowa, and probably not a hundred in all the Pioneer region, would lead snap-judgment minds to conclude that its people were indifferent to sanitation and disregardful of bodily cleanliness. And yet, in these widely sundered lines of human interest material growth could not have come if the people who lived in the earlier period had not met their limitations, hard as they were, with courage and intelligence.

### SEEMING REMOTENESS

THE writer is prone to confess that although he has sought to do his duty in a series of small units, the period

## Pioneer Foundations

under study, so far as it falls within his own life, often seems to him almost as remote as the earliest of American settlements. The changes in population, in wealth, in the opportunity for knowledge (though not always in actual knowledge itself), and in outlook and spirit are so striking that it is almost impossible to believe the evidence of the physical senses. It sometimes seems that the familiar forms of industry and government, the ideals and institutions, the educational methods and social life, the religious ideas and methods, and the varied human activities once known to himself had all died and found burial along with the men and women who had preserved them or lived through them. When one has seen a part of this period and recalls it, he is often tempted to imagine himself an archeologist excavating with hammer, pick, and spade among the buried ruins of a civilization contemporary with the early Egyptians.

Without a knowledge as intimate as possible of these so recent days we can no more comprehend our own times than Victor Duruy could understand or write the history of France before he had mastered in turn that of Rome and Greece. However rude these communities may seem, the essentials of humanity are imbedded in them. They were as independent of each other and of the world as it is given men to be in any environment. They were not only filled with full-blooded, richly-dowered individualities, but were concrete as political and social entities. Because they existed, we are what we have become. Thus, if our present conditions demand study, so in even larger measure do the others which are a part of our life.

## Complicated Government

### COMPLICATED GOVERNMENT

A KNOWLEDGE will be assumed of the fundamental social ideas slowly developed in this country. I shall remember that I am dealing with a vast area, a series of communities which, though recent in time so far as settlement and conquest are concerned, mark many changes in administrative and political detail. Neither the minute town system of New England nor the county government of Virginia or Pennsylvania was illustrated as a whole anywhere in the vast new regions. Experience so modified them as to yield the power needed by newly-assembled neighborhoods, diverse in origin and with problems differing in many respects from those which had furnished them both ideas and population. If they encouraged the initiative upon which new human aggregations are so prone to pride themselves, it was for the reason that through all our development nothing has been more in evidence than the capacity for adjustment.

As governors or other officials went out from widely-separated States under the authority of the Federal government (themselves varying in origin, customs, manners, and methods) they found themselves set over a population still more mixed in origin and motives. All were zealous for the adoption of the features familiar to them, so that dovetailing was a necessary process. The universal American resentment of discipline made it impossible for these populations, however crude or small in number, to give any large measure of authority to official leaders. The first duty of Territorial officials was not to attempt to rule or to govern,

## Pioneer Foundations

but to so carry themselves that their constituents might govern and rule themselves. Small elected councils, composed of efficient and often rather assertive pioneers drawn from many sources, constituted the new governing bodies. They moulded or interpreted public sentiment, governed through it, and uniformly resented interference. Their understanding of each other was so complete that they could resist aggression from temporary outside officials, if at any time it became serious or offensive. In point of fact, government cuts so small a figure among a Pioneer population as to be almost negligible. It must be treated, but it will have no outstanding place in my task.

I propose to deal with a population thrown thus into a succession of new neighborhoods, and to show how it made its way out of simple conditions while consulting the needs and desires of the majority of its units. I greatly fear that, in many instances, what I shall describe may seem to be abstract rather than filled with the concreteness which was its outstanding trait. In this way my promise not to write history, for which I have no commission either in fitness or desire, will be kept. Any readers that I may attract will be found among those familiar with the strictly chronological events in the life of the fractional generations included in my plan.

### LACK OF MATERIALS

IN no part of our history is the evidence for reaching literary judgments less available than in dealing with the West. Little was written about it, and the absence of

## Lack of Materials

memoirs, letters, and studies native to the soil and dealing with early conditions often reduces the student to the observations of the stray scamperer from the outside — sometimes a foreigner. Even these are few in number and their contributions were so lacking in continuity that only small or scattered districts were covered. Generally speaking, they were scarcely more than outposts of older settlements differing from each other only in greater remoteness.

There was not much for a traveler to see. One stretch of unbroken forest, or a sweep of open prairie, was much like another because the few people living in either could not have acquired new or peculiar characteristics. There was only an occasional domestic missionary who found what he sought. The rare traveler from abroad was inclined to be a prig who, as he expected to find the accustomed, often dealt in commonplace or paradox. He looked for roads and bridges even if there were no people to use them; he was disappointed not to see in a wilderness the inns or comfortable stagecoaches to which he was accustomed; or he mourned the absence of lofty rituals from quarters where they had never been heard of. Sometimes the traveler was an adventurer before there was much to seek, or a speculator who could find nobody to deal with. Naturally, even these scribbling outsiders could not communicate more than they had learned unless they belonged to the class of imitation Munchausens always in evidence in new countries; even these contributions tended to disappear after people had really attained sufficient numbers to command interest as human beings.

## Pioneer Foundations

This absence of studies is not surprising. Great changes impended under which in less than a hundred years an unsuspected, unseen empire was to grow from nothing; but, at all stages of the period under study, its small population was spread over an almost boundless area. Its people were so busy with their work that they wrote little about themselves and cared less whether or not outsiders paid them any attention. Pitied and patronized, they were as innocent of the story-telling gift as Canning's needy knife-grinder. The truth is that the outside world showed little interest in these distant, almost unknown, people. Europe had its own problems, one of which was rooted in its fear lest American example might prove hurtful to it; while the country east of the Alleghenies was never seriously interested in the West until by its growth it became a political power and when its help was needed in the Civil War.

After 1865 even the stupid and indifferent could see that account must be taken of the vast territory which had furnished nearly half the soldiers to the Union army and a considerable contingent to the Confederacy. It was then too late to take up the slack, and it has been too late ever since. Formal histories of the United States and of the Civil War have not done much to enlarge the area of knowledge. Much good work has been done, but most of it has been so fugitive or so buried in the mass that, compared with the full materials available when writing of the Colonies, this territory which has long held more than one-third of our population has had to bide its time.

## Early Influences in Iowa

Its earlier development has, indeed, found in Theodore Roosevelt a historian fair and free, independent and sympathetic. *The Winning of the West* has all the literary merits of its author and few of his shortcomings, and by reason of its wide currency has done a service seldom equalled in these later days by an historical work. It covers so well the earliest years as to inspire regret that the work was never carried down to the later days which are so full of the achievement forecast in a literary torso. It is a pity that the world could not have had his complete story of the West until the close of the Jackson period in 1841, as well as two terms in the Presidency.

### EARLY INFLUENCES IN IOWA

FOUR features in the development of Iowa around which this study revolves only because it is the culminating effort of the Pioneer life are often overlooked: (1) it was the earliest free State to be carved from the vast territory included in the Louisiana Purchase; (2) it was the only one anywhere, up to the time of its admission, whose growth in population and admission into the Union was not accompanied by violence either in act or discussion; (3) it was the last settlement made under the conditions that had existed, with little change, since the English landing in Virginia in 1607 and thus drew an order of settlers with more variety and greater stability than any of those States north of the Ohio which from Pennsylvania westward were part of the Northwest Territory; (4) it was still dependent upon the ox and the horse — methods of land transporta-

## Pioneer Foundations

tion only slightly changed during three thousand years of the history of the western world.

But Iowa was more than the last of the Pioneer communities in mere point of time. In population, in the survival of original ideas in politics and social life, in an outlook compounded of breadth and narrowness the generation of men here dealt with stands out like its own great plateau from which waters run, though in unequal proportions, to two distant and widely separated rivers. Within the brief period therein treated the earlier seventeenth century meets the later nineteenth, its people having, in effect, lived under conditions common to all intervening periods.

When in 1870 four railroads had been built over its prairies and across the Missouri River, when the State itself was an entity and every county had a name and character, it became a monument to things as they had been. Every State further west was finally settled after the railroad had superseded animal power as the principal form of long distance transport. This fact influenced the character of settlers and changed or solved their problems. This date marked a revolution (even more complete than most revolutions) in industrial conditions between the real Pioneer who had advanced over the country, slowly but surely at the average annual rate of a six-mile township, and his successor who followed in the wake of the engineer, the contractor, and the railroad manager.

Thus emphasis is given to the permanence of social, political, industrial, educational, and religious conditions. The ideas and ideals of 1850 (even those of eleven years later)



## Early Influences in Iowa

differed only in non-essentials from those which during the previous hundred years had dominated life over the line of march from Virginia, Maryland, Carolina, and Pennsylvania. This fact has an interest of its own as the last link in the chain. As the student traces the origin and the simple beginnings of a civilized race from the habits, customs, manners, tools, and industries of surviving primitive tribes or peoples and thus reconstructs the remote past, so those who have really known the life of an early day may best see and record the simple conditions through which our people passed within so short a period — conditions unfamiliar even to their grandchildren. Interest in this earlier life, from a family or individual point of view, seems almost to have disappeared while its relation to our own times is constantly overlooked.

After the railroad crossed the Missouri, the true Pioneer who had fought his way for fifteen hundred miles (eight hundred of them through heavy, virgin forest) facing Indians, disease, privation, intellectual aridity, and an isolation, perhaps without example in human history, forever disappeared. At each remove he had adapted himself to the necessary changes until the element of adventure, like that of imminent danger, had disappeared and upon this his last stand he found himself master, potentially, of the most fertile tract for its size that mankind working as it firmly believed in obedience to Divine command has subdued. He took possession of this greater Mesopotamia without violence with Indians, and with little of the truculence and personal violence characteristic of new communities.

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He found himself part of a sparse but eclectic population drawn from all the native groups and foreign sources that during its whole history had contributed to the conquest of a continent. This gave to his task a stability which enabled him to take it up with the energy and courage shown by his forebears, and to project it into later times.

### ORDINARY RESEARCH ALMOST HELPLESS

THE materials for such a study are not revealed by the process known as historical research. They do not exist in document form. They are hid in tradition — that unrecorded knowledge whose value is not always fully appreciated. Its facts and conclusions are useful only when they are interpreted with something of insight and poise, and with less regard to tiresome details than to the philosophy of history.

When late in life William B. Weedon, the economic historian of New England, proposed to deal with some phases of the Civil War, he was greeted with the assurance, "Oh! those who write about it must have lived it!" If this were true of a period in which there is a wealth of documents, with its multitude of outstanding survivors, how much more difficult it must be for the lone student, born out of due time, to attempt the task of dealing with the more recondite conditions that confront him now that the workmen belong almost wholly to "the free among the dead".

Our Pioneers who did the work awaiting them wrote neither memoirs nor history. They did not analyze them-

## Ordinary Research Almost Helpless

selves or their time; and hardly any attempt had been made even so much as to define the word psychology. If they failed to magnify their office it was because they did not know they had one. They did for themselves and for posterity their appointed work; but thought no more of the latter than of the former. It thus becomes necessary, if the truth is to be learned about people, government, industry, religion, or education, to search for the fact or inference rather than to find it floating on the surface in such form that persons interested may hope to understand it.

This conclusion applies to all the tedious journey of the Pioneer from the Atlantic coast to the Missouri River. Even the simple genealogies recorded in family Bibles have nearly all been lost beyond recovery. The men and women who first occupied and with their families and descendants subdued this area did not write descriptive or analytical letters. Essays, memoirs, and books were beyond their thought. They were engaged in a struggle where the first necessity was to live at all. After that they had first to register for themselves a material success — dull and prosaic almost beyond example. When the contingent reserved for this last scene of the pioneer communities had accomplished its mission its task had been executed without war or bloodshed, with little fraudulent Indian trading, and less of the truculence accompanying settlement where the aboriginal inhabitants, hiding in the forests, had made a stand for what has been represented as their ancestral homes. The absence of such features deprived this life of the romance which was even exaggerated in the older settlements.

## Pioneer Foundations

In spite of these lacks, it is impossible to understand Illinois or Iowa, the first of the distinctively prairie States, without a fair knowledge of the conditions behind life in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri, in whose settlement and early trials so many problems found at least a temporary solution. Out of these States, essentially new, came the people who as Pioneers made Iowa possible. Whatever their remoter origin, they were inheritors of the habits fixed during the previous two hundred years. Their predecessors and associates had fought the Indian through the woods and thickets of eight hundred miles. On the edge of the great prairie, in a decisive battle at the little Tippecanoe Creek, they had inflicted that defeat which fixed his place on the American continent. It is creditable to his race that it made its last stand under the leadership, though not the direct command, of Tecumseh — its greatest man. Out of the security thus achieved, Pioneers, instructed and trained, finally emerged to carry on their work without the necessity of "making their habitations on a battlefield."

### DIVERSITY OF ORIGIN

THUS, in dealing with these men and their heavy task, the idea, sedulously encouraged in much of the so-called literature of our time, that they had been transplanted without training or preparation from settled parts of the world must be abandoned. Rotten boroughs might have such sponsors; but States, real in dignity and independence, are not created by either cowboys or tenderfeet. They are the

## Diversity of Origin

product of character, ability, experience, and discipline. Their founders went out into the wilderness, not in groups or colonies, but as individuals or in families. They conquered difficulties that to outward seeming were insurmountable.

As they moved forward step by step they encountered companions, many and fit, along with the adventurous, wild, idle, quarrelsome, and useless, wanting in every quality inherent in the true Pioneer. To the former, slowly attracting their like so that their ambition and intelligence were dominant, there came a material prosperity, quick, assured, and stable, that was enjoyed under wholesome and civilizing conditions and accompanied by mental and moral progress. Where, as it often happened, the ignorant and turbulent forced the solid and ambitious to move on, there were left the communities, sometimes backward, sometimes violent, often both, long found in parts of Tennessee and Kentucky and the southern counties of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and still longer in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas.

These varied origins account, in a measure, for divergencies still existing in the social fabric and for the qualities, strong or weak, that, entering into the constitution of communities, emphasize dependence upon the past and the power of heredity. The philosophy of settlement, slowly and painfully made over an empty continent, lies quite as deep and is as much hid from the surface view as do those still larger movements of population which, going on through the history of men, have been known as colonies. The purposes have been the same in both, however different

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the ideas behind them. The colony that went forth voluntarily from an old to a new territory had to accept the fate of a dependency — whose exploitation was an ultimate certainty. To them, independence and ordered liberty could only come when they rebelled against an intolerable oppression.

Contrasted with this method the Pioneer, when passing beyond the zone of settlement and fixed law, has felt that his struggles were preliminary to the full and complete establishment of the authority of his country : he knew that his government, even when it did not anticipate his coming, would overtake him if he went to its remotest settled frontier; that it would give his rude efforts the protection that lay in its power; and that he could anticipate the time when in continued enjoyment of a real equality of opportunity he would get his reward for services rendered.

### *NOTHING DONE IN A CORNER*

It is difficult to realize now, when to all seeming the varied features of our life have been studied and written about to repletion, how little is really known about this rapid and most distinctive and persistent migration seen among men, considering the short time it occupied. Naturally, it would be misleading to compare it with the slow-moving, glacier-like advance that marked the spread of the Aryan race from Asia over Europe, or even that other relentless return march by the Northern peoples for the sunshine and power incident to their descent upon Italy and the West and

## Nothing Done in a Corner

South of Europe : the one is hid in the impenetrable fogs of ages, while the other is overlaid by myth and legend.

On the other hand, the conquest of America took place under the eyes of all men. From its beginnings in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts to its end in Iowa and Minnesota, there was no rest, no concealment; its creators told their story day by day in work not in words : their representatives came and went without hindrance; the tide of population ebbed as well as flowed; it was kept continually before distant legislative bodies; voluntary religious and political organizations touched elbows with it, and the complications resulting from all this knowledge had to be met.

And yet, nothing in modern history has been treated with less knowledge or intelligence : not one of the commanding phases of our national growth is so little understood. Here, as elsewhere, "the drum and trumpet" historians have held the field. If there was commotion in Missouri or Kansas, its echoes rolled back over prairie, forest, valley, river, and mountain, and were often confused with the cries of the real people who, there as elsewhere, were working out the problems that confronted them. This resounding clamor was raised in distant communities by an insignificant minority who, expressing the demands of the trader or the shrieks of the fanatic, sought to convince the country and the world that they reflected actual opinion. Analysis of the small contribution made by the agitating and writing elements of the period from 1830 to 1860 shows how much they talked and wrote and how little they

## Pioneer Foundations

did to make the real West; and it emphasizes the difference between them and the real nurseries of population.

The fact remains that other than Roosevelt (and, as explained, he only in part) no historian has interpreted the philosophy of this great movement. This conclusion applies especially to the novelists and the poets. In that amazing brood of "best sellers" (so fertile during recent years that it would seem to prove the theory of spontaneous generation) where coarse invention displaces truth, and high imagination and style are both lost in Hamlet's "words, words, words", there has been an absence of perspective; the hard and sordid has been so confused with the whole that an edge, an angle, a corner, or a side has obscured the whole structure. All these elements have tended to make the average modern American novel, so far as it deals with our pioneer history, a reproach to our literature.

### WHY PLAIN FACTS ARE NEGLECTED

THERE are many reasons for this neglect or failure, the principal one being that it was impossible for students and writers on our society to deal with real life. When they wrote at all, they were too busy with essays and disquisitions on abstract rights, with the assertion and emphasis of discredited or dangerous social theories, or with the promotion of methods and laws subversive of economic growth or stability, to afford opportunity for contact with basic conditions or to see much less to interpret them. It was not deemed interesting to tell the story of that development in the midst of which both people and students passed



## Why Plain Facts Are Neglected

their lives, to trace the origins of the varied population there working out its destiny, to study the motives that drew or drove men from one State or neighborhood into another, or to recognize the growth, decline, or changes in religious opinion or observance.

This accounts for the fact that so far as real comprehension of all-round conditions is concerned the Pioneer is, in his essential features, less known than the Homeric Greeks. The principal fault or drawback is inherent in our people themselves. With better facilities for education, with furtive signs of improved taste, there has been a palpable decline of interest in origins or history. To all appearances the shifting generations care little for the past — a fact shown by the decline not only of classical study, but of that modern history so much vaunted. The claims of both, though admitted in theory, are seldom assured in actual life and conduct. The so-called practical teaching in our scheme of education, ranging from primary school to university, the emphasis laid upon the technical side of training, the abnormal claims preferred for the young, the exaggerated interest in sports and games, the dynamic conditions that disturb the quiet of individual and family life and produce the artificial, and the loss of power by the church (hitherto the strongest of historic links) unite to make a study of the work of creative men less attractive than in former periods. The effect is decisive in a country which, itself new, with material achievements instead of traditions, and sceptical or distrustful of legends, because it has so few, is driven to look to future development.

## Pioneer Foundations

In spite of these tendencies there are signs of a revived interest in matters American. While most university studies and monographs are still given over to those new-fangled ideas and methods included in the vague thing called sociology, while the so-called documents often tend to become ends rather than intelligent means, some young men are giving attention to subjects dealing with the experience and knowledge of their predecessors. As some of these must deal with the recent past there may yet emerge contributions far above the rather restricted merits of the average local history. Even in the latter there is an improvement over the conditions that surrounded this literary product even a generation ago. In addition to the college man, the work of a few women of education and training is deserving of encouragement and imitation. If attention can be attracted to such study there is reason to hope that more of the philosophy which underlies human effort in the initial stage of our communities may make itself known.

### CONDITIONS ENTERING INTO ACCOUNT

BEFORE examining human surroundings in this area during the period named, it may be well to pass in rapid review some of the conditions in our national life. Only in this way can we understand the heritage into which this ultimate State suddenly came as a corporate entity in American life, with complete participation in the councils of the time. Nothing can be more important than the process which shifts a free community from tutelage into responsibility for its own acts and into participation in national affairs.

## Conditions Entering into Account

It signals a change in outlook. Now and then, notably in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, a Territory had some outstanding man as its Governor. In such cases the transition was easy because it involved only slight changes while bringing added authority to accredited leaders and a new sense of dignity which enabled the people to forecast their future as a natural outcome from their past.

Few Territories escaped with so short an apprenticeship as did Iowa. Although its settlers were drawn slowly and from many and widely separated points, it became a Territory within five years after settlement in 1833, and a full-fledged State with the unusual privilege of two Representatives in Congress after another eight years of waiting. Like Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, its population was drawn either directly or indirectly from the South, as was that of its neighbor, Missouri; but the former belonged to the type which, whatever their origin or environment, left no doubt about their attitude towards freedom or slavery.

The difference lay in the motives which led each class to its particular destination. In the earlier settlements freedom or slavery was not a deciding idea or feature. In the later, without being the outcome of an artificial agitation like that which made the word "Kansas" a synonym for violence and destruction, it was a magnet which drew those elements who, whether from moral sentiment or economic interest, or from the still lower motive that drove the poor white westward, or anywhere, away from himself, the effect was the same: it brought together a population homo-

## Pioneer Foundations

geneous in idea and purpose. The later political course of Iowa might have been foreseen even thus early because there was held in solution the solidity and concentration that time has revealed. It also foreshadowed, in a degree, its monotonous mediocrity.

It is to be remembered that the western country had then fairly passed through that distinctive social stratum known as the "Jefferson Brick" period. The curious customs which Mrs. Trollope found north of the Ohio; others so exaggerated by Miss Martineau and Captain Marryatt that, even with the resulting anger, they provoked a smile over our peculiarities; and those features with which Dickens dealt in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* — all these had either been lost or modified in the War with Mexico which, in spite of its *opera bouffé* quality, blew away something more than the smoke that rose above distant battlefields bearing unfamiliar names. The natural tendency to union and the doggedness of the Jacksonian regime had defeated nullification and made possible nationality and a broader and more vital patriotism. In due time, despite faults and weaknesses, the whole country was losing the status of a boisterous boy and was growing into some semblance of manly seriousness : it was getting relief from the worst of its growing pains.

### INFLUENCE OF THE CONVENTION SYSTEM

WHILE the West was inchoate and Iowa was not even in embryo, delegate conventions were finding acceptance as elements in politics and forecasting the influence which they

## Influence of the Convention System

were to acquire. The fact that these ephemeral bodies (like the insects which die when they have served the purpose of their production) furnished about the earliest signs that our republican system was holding its own, and that at the same time nationality was on the way to suppress that provincialism or parochialism which had hitherto threatened the integrity of our institutions and imperiled their workings, is often overlooked. When men of varied minds and needs were gathered each four years from every quarter in voluntary but effective meetings for large purposes, compromise and coöperation became necessities and left the essential but dreaded power of centralization potentially organized. These latter tendencies are generally traced no further back than the Civil War; but the convention system, a gradual growth but effective in the second generation of the century, drove deep into a fertile soil the ideas and methods that accompanied a popular political activity.

That it should spread downward into every phase of our life was inevitable. Its importance in unifying the sentiment of States, congressional districts, and even smaller divisions may easily be slighted but cannot be overlooked or forgotten. It was a factor in the growth of corporate individuality and, perhaps, of assertiveness in that New West which without it would have had difficulty from sparseness of population in making itself heard. In the councils of a nation it would have been smothered by numbers, power, and wealth, as well as by that patronage always so characteristic of older communities when dealing with their offshoots.

## Pioneer Foundations

### RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

IN such a study attention must be devoted to religious conditions. Little change was apparent in these over the whole of the Pioneer area during the first forty years after the earliest settlement of Iowa. The traditions, doctrines, and methods remained potent longer here than in any other community of the Middle West. Perhaps none of the latter (with the possible exception of Kentucky and Tennessee) has been at once so distinctively Protestant and American — long convertible terms — a Protestantism, whencesoever derived, Puritanic in the narrowest modern sense, and an Americanism which tended often to be both truculent and offensive. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Michigan were all so modified by French and Catholic influences as to promote real toleration. This forbade that monopoly of new and unhistoric forms of worship which prevailed wherever the rasping, uncouth, extreme, and almost indefinable Evangelicalism commanded the field without competition.

Historic and artistic religious forms were thus overlaid by narrow sects in which the clergy lacked knowledge, intellectual power, or real fitness, so that they were subordinated to rough zeal and an ability to adjust themselves to hard material conditions. In all Christian history there has probably never been a series of communities in which as a class the clergy were so inferior when compared with the best then known or even the best potentially in their congregations as those of the new West ranging in time between the settlement of Kentucky and the first thirty

## Religious Activities

years of that of Iowa. It is difficult to treat this phase without seeming to stress it unduly : even the descendants of these sturdy Pioneers can scarcely understand what their predecessors suffered on the one hand, or what, on the other hand, they themselves escaped.

The movement known as the Great Revival — succeeding the Great Awakening of the days of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield — swept over the thin settlements west of the Alleghenies when the eighteenth century was wearing to a close and continued its uncouth ravings during the early days of its successor. It left a strong impress upon the time. Its appeal to fear, ignorance, emotion, and the resulting fanaticism, were bad enough even when the story of its processes and its hysterical though steady progress in New England and the old States was told in measured terms; but, beyond the mountains the purposes and the effects of its successor became more apparent when they swept away, as by a deluge, accepted forms of worship rooted in Christian experience. It excluded Catholics entirely; it almost paralyzed Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, and Moravians; and it made room for terrible onslaughts by crude Methodists, Baptists, and Campbellites and still smaller and ruder sects whose conservatism was lost in a noisy zeal that could not be maintained. The whole of the Pioneer area long drifted helplessly in the groundswell of this movement — so luckless and so crudely superstitious — only escaping from it when with the heralded approach of the fateful year of 1870 reason regained something of its old-time force.

## Pioneer Foundations

### *HOW GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE SPREAD*

IN the extension of American settlement the most surprising feature was the way that a new colony, territory, district, State, or region attracted people. Often within a few years a wilderness was so filled with population that it sent forth shoots into every part still newer. A good illustration of this tendency is found in Iowa which, though not opened to settlement until June, 1833, had sent only seventeen years later to other communities eleven per cent of the children born in the meantime upon its soil. The exodus thus begun later reached such proportions that a larger ratio of natives of Iowa found homes outside its borders than from any other western State.

It has always been a mystery how these early people could learn anything about the outlying portions of the great wilderness—which then included everything beyond the boundaries of settlement—so that they should be drawn from their homes into still newer districts. And yet there was a fairly accurate popular knowledge of the country lying between the Alleghenies and the Missouri River. This could not come from reading or study because such materials did not exist. Neither the narratives of the colonizers, like the adventurous Englishmen, Fordham, Flower, and Birkbeck who wrote so exclusively for their own compatriots that their books had no general circulation, or of travelers like Burnaby, or of Flint and other missionaries, nor the geographies and handbooks of Jedediah Morse were generally known in the new settlements. After the days of Boone there were few outstanding adventures or records



## How Geographical Knowledge Spread

of travel to carry a knowledge of distant districts to the scattered ranks of humanity camping along an ever shifting front.

But the mystery is not mysterious. This knowledge of outlying regions was almost intuitive. It is difficult now to conceive the extent of the restless movements of these early populations. The going and the return of men or families (often for no obvious reason) after they had made a small clearing in the forests brought to many persons a practical and surprising familiarity with distant regions. It seemed that the principal business in life for much of the population was moving on or moving back. They did not always know where they could go, for, even when ready to start, they might hesitate about the direction they should take. The influence of this practical knowledge of geography upon both permanent settlement and political stability is not easily reckoned because it is unrecorded and unknown. Coupled with a curiosity never sated and a loquacity seldom surpassed, information about the wilderness or the prairie, however distant, was widely spread. Not all of it was accurate; but few serious mistakes were made in measuring the general possibilities or in recording the actual conditions of a given area.

The result of this migratory habit was to draw people into many scattered neighborhoods remote from settlements. A peculiarity in soil, timber, water, or transportation would become known and attract its little contingent. The effect was to give the map of a newly settled State or Territory the appearance of a notched stick or a crosscut saw. It

## Pioneer Foundations

might be long before the interstices would be filled; perhaps not until some district still more remote was settled or the discovery was made that those nearby were worthy of attention, when there would be a turning movement that would eliminate these human salients.

Swaying thus backwards and forwards into a changed environment, population had to adapt itself to a variety of conditions. This life had in it little that was stable; it had almost no attachment to a given soil, neighborhood, or landscape upon which sentiment or local patriotism could be built. It was scarcely possible to develop these so long as many men born in one State and attending school in another often passed on to take up larger activities in two or three others. Of this migratory instinct, there was the example of the writer's father who, born in Ohio three months after his mother had left Virginia, lived after his third birthday thirty years in Indiana, two in Illinois, twenty-eight in Iowa, only to die after seventeen years of residence in Nebraska. Nor could the rolling-stone theory be applied in this case or to thousands of others. Abraham Lincoln himself illustrated this tendency. Of a Virginia family, he was born and lived during early childhood in Kentucky, passed his later youth and young manhood in Indiana, and found his life work just before reaching his majority in Illinois.

Such men and their families dowered with the pioneer mind and inured to the moving habit worked out their destiny whatever their geographic or social surroundings. All human motives, known or imagined, entered into ac-

## How Geographical Knowledge Spread

count in these migrations. Often, whether applied to the average or the majority, the shifting process was bad; but those fitted by natural strength and training to bear it at all often obtained an education and a discipline that increased rather than impaired power and influence.

In like manner, without the intervention of climatic changes, the extremes of heat and cold were far more serious matters than now. The miasmatic swamps, bayous, and sloughs along the streams, the more than torrid nights, the long workdays under a burning sun without rest or respite, the presence of mosquitoes in their favorite breeding-spots, the absence of ice or other artificial methods of preserving food-stuffs, made the summers almost unbearable. The low ceilings, the imperfect roofs or walls, the proximity of domestic animals in the barns, fields, or woods, the primitive, imperfect methods of heating, with the dangers and discomforts incident to low temperatures, put outside of hypothetical limits any question about the comparative suffering in the summer over the winter. As it was impossible to overcome such drawbacks, they left their mark upon the three generations of men who not only had to live in spite of them but to fashion new commonwealths out of social and political forms long in existence.



THE PROCESSES OF SETTLEMENT



## GENESIS OF THE PIONEER REGION

IN order to understand how settlement went forward from the original colonies, a brief reference to those human reservoirs in which (at four different periods, separated from each other by a generation of mankind) population was stored will be necessary. Some permanent settlers followed Daniel Boone rather rapidly after his initial visit to Kentucky in 1769. (It is well to remember that George Washington, not yet forty, went into that wilderness in 1770 in his professional capacity as a land surveyor.) Before the Revolution, the accretions were slow and tedious until, the war over, recruits removed in ever increasing numbers from Virginia and North Carolina with many from Pennsylvania, and some even from South Carolina. The infant community then rapidly took on the form of a real settlement. This was further promoted by the Ordinance of 1787 creating the Northwest Territory, the transfer by Virginia and North Carolina of the territory south of the Ohio, and finally by the adoption of the Constitution and the formal organization of the Federal government.

It is remarkable that from these small and hard beginnings the first census, taken in 1790, should have disclosed as living in these new districts a total population of 109,398, of which Kentucky contained 73,657 with enough more

## Pioneer Foundations

early in 1791 to make it the first State admitted by special act into the Union; while Tennessee, with 35,691, had to wait only six years to acquire the same status. In the same year Ohio, where no enumeration was made, was estimated to have about four thousand inhabitants, mostly drawn from Virginia and Pennsylvania or from the restless scattering contingents across the Ohio River who thus made their second removal.

This was the beginning of the Pioneer region whose biography during its first hundred years I have presumed to write. The area included is the quadrilateral lying west between Pennsylvania and the Missouri River and north between the Tennessee River and the Great Lakes. It then lay in three tracts or divisions: the Territory South of the Ohio; the Northwest Territory; and a part of what was then Louisiana, owned until 1803 in alternation by Spain and France, its ownership never being quite known without a reference to the latest map or peace treaty. When finally organized, this region was to comprise the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, settled in turn under the same simple conditions by people, whence-soever drawn, of the same race, language, religion, and character. History does not afford many instances, if any, in which a people has grown to such numbers, wealth, culture, and greatness, with agreement in human essentials, during the initial century and a half of its existence as did the nearly forty millions now found in the area under examination.



## Seed Plots of Population

### SEED PLOTS OF POPULATION

FOR reasons already explained I have taken Iowa as the key community and fixed 1850, the middle year of the period, as the turning point for this study. The former was the last real example of the use of the old methods of transportation over so large an area, and the latter afforded the earliest opportunity to know where these people had come from. There were a few seed plots of population : the Northeastern colonies comprising eight States : those of New England, New York, and New Jersey. Three in the old Middle States : Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. Virginia and North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, south of the Potomac. The table shows at a glance at four periods, the shifting power of these sources.

The Northeastern States had before them the conquest and settlement of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York (west of the Hudson, still a wilderness in 1783) and large parts of New Jersey, besides maintaining their own growth. Western Pennsylvania was still thinly settled; and even Delaware and Maryland had many open spaces to fill; but the latter three, like Virginia and North Carolina, were contiguous to this newly opened territory so that to their adventurous people was left the task of swarming across the mountains.

The general result, after ninety years of effort by all concerned, is reflected in 1850 in the following table which shows by States what contribution each of these reservoirs had made to the peopling of the Pioneer region :

# Pioneer Foundations

## SOURCES OF POPULATION AVAILABLE FOR NEW SETTLEMENTS — 1760-1850

States	1760 Estimated	1790	1820	1850
New England	459,000	1,009,206	1,660,071	2,728,116
New York	113,000	340,241	1,372,812	3,097,394
New Jersey	91,000	184,139	277,575	489,555
Pennsylvania	220,000	433,611	1,049,458	2,311,786
Delaware	*	59,096	72,749	91,532
Maryland	162,000	319,728	440,389	634,721
Virginia	346,000	747,610	1,065,366	1,421,661
North Carolina	115,000	395,005	638,829	869,039
South Carolina	95,000	249,073	502,741	668,507
Georgia	9,000	82,548	226,739	272,151
Kentucky		73,677	564,317	982,405
Tennessee		35,691	422,823	1,002,717

## Seed Plots of Population

NATIVE WHITES BORN IN OTHER STATES  
LIVING IN THE PIONEER REGION : 1850

Living in Pioneer States	Born In :					Totals
	New England	Slave States	New York	New Jersey	Pennsyl- vania	New Free States
Kentucky	2,608	106,297	2,881	1,249	7,491	17,661
Tennessee	970	164,837	1,019		2,146	2,428
Ohio	66,032	151,693	83,979	23,532	200,634	11,604
Indiana	10,646	175,549	24,310	7,837	44,245	126,689
Illinois	36,542	137,581	67,180	6,848	37,979	99,936
Missouri	3,214	189,801	5,040	885	8,291	38,190
Michigan	30,923	3,542	133,756	5,572	9,452	17,567
Iowa	5,535	27,585	8,134	1,199	14,744	59,098
Wisconsin	27,029	5,286	68,595	1,566	9,571	21,812
Total	182,959	962,171	394,894	48,688	334,553	394,985
						2,318,250

## Pioneer Foundations

### *FUSING NEW ELEMENTS*

IOWA not only stands at the apex of the Pioneer pyramid as the last great American community to be settled under the old-time methods : it was, in reality, the first fruit of the movement which for more than two hundred years had slowly made its way towards the prairie. Its early settlers were so distant from the seacoast States that the latter had almost no direct influence. Only a small proportion of them had grown to maturity in the parent communities — the colonies of the Revolutionary period. To the contrary, even when born in the remoter East or South, they had left when comparatively young and had so subjected themselves to the Pioneer training that other experiences or memories did not remain even as traditions.

Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois had been the main training grounds. In the final migration to this remoter West, the settler followed with the flowing tide. Whatever the place of birth, this secondary migration was made up of Pioneers seasoned to a life different from that of their predecessors. They were adventurous and enterprising, sighing for still better conditions; ever drawn by the mirage of the prairie. Thus, new communities came into being, attained a certain growth, assumed the parental relation, and sent out children to new settlements.

A period longer than usual in our early history had elapsed since a new entity in the form of a State had come into the Union. Between the admission of Ohio, Indiana, and its neighbors, Illinois and Missouri, the interval had been short. That between Illinois and Iowa, the next to

## How Settlers Came and Went

the West, was nearly thirty years, almost a generation. The conditions thus favored a sober but rapid movement of population : the opportunity coming when the Indian title was finally extinguished. The way once opened in June, 1833, the attraction was so strong as to make itself felt throughout the newer West. It was not one of those rushes in which thousands of land-hungry people, often disorderly or quarrelsome, were camped upon the border ready at a given signal to invade the land offices. The presence of the broad Mississippi rendered this impossible even if the great numbers of modern days had not been wanting. As a result, the settlers began their experiment with that order and system which has distinguished them and their successors whether they were component parts of a Territory, a State, or a nation.

### HOW SETTLERS CAME AND WENT

IN dealing with men associated by design or accident it is important to know who they are, where they started, and how they came together. In spite of that admixture of elements which has distinguished all our history, this matter has never attracted the study it deserves. In the earlier days population ebbed and flowed with as little question about the how, the where, or the why as do the tides : both were a matter of course. These migratory people did not write either general history or individual memoirs : they simply moved on and on, though not without plan or purpose, never in any considerable measure as colonies, and left their annals to chance or destruction.

## Pioneer Foundations

There was ample reason for lack of knowledge of origins or of interest in them. Settlement was, in the main, a thing of shreds and patches : now one quarter, or district, or neighborhood, would in some mysterious way acquire population, drawing it sometimes from one State, sometimes from another, or, often from widely separated sources. In due course, a series of these meager neighborhoods would, almost unconsciously, find themselves associated into a county; but, as all spoke the same language and practiced like forms of religious worship they were free from neighborhood prejudices. They had the same industrial aspirations and prospects, were attached to the same political ideas and institutions, and they did not ask questions about each other.

When members passed on either as individuals, families, or groups, from one community to another and newer one, no sentimental attachment had been formed to any district so that local patriotism was seldom generated. One set of small settlements was pretty much the same as another, further up or down some small stream; and, as they scarcely differed in origin, in class, in wealth, or in outlook, there was little reason why they should be exclusive or show any pride in this or that place because it was theirs by the accident of residence or birth.

Naturally this conclusion did not apply to the people who had either inherited or made a position for themselves on the soil of the original colonies; but, as these seldom deliberately moved directly into a new settlement of the remoter West to remain for any length of time the longing,

## Diverse American Origins

when it existed, clung around the original place and not about the newer one. As an effect of this general distribution, the West grew up almost perfectly free from the domination or influence of any one State or community of origin. No matter what proportion of the settlers of Indiana or Illinois, or in their individual counties, might come from Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia, or elsewhere, they seldom sought to control political or other movements in their new environment. Until they had emerged from the woods, it was a neighborhood necessity that they should stand in union; once out of them, they would have common economic and political purposes to bind them together.

### DIVERSE AMERICAN ORIGINS

THE issue of the census report for 1850 enabled our people to form a fairly accurate idea of themselves : who or what they were, whence they had come, and the extent to which they had been either advantaged or injured by the restless internal migration that had been under way even long before the War of Independence. It was then seen how distinctly American, in the original sense of the word, the new West was. There had always been a foreign immigration; but it was small and had hugged the Atlantic coast so closely that, except in Wisconsin at a comparatively late period, it had little influence upon customs, events, or character. The English, the Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and Canadians long remained the only important foreigners. With the ingress of immigrants using a language other than English, it was not long until these older elements prac-

## Pioneer Foundations

tically ceased to be thought of as foreigners at all. They merged themselves so thoroughly into the native population that they combined with it in opposition to the admission of certain nationalities, especially the Irish, against whom there was a religious and racial prejudice.

The claim had long been made (in turn, by writers in New England, the old Middle States, Virginia, and North Carolina) that each had contributed most liberally to the new and somewhat mysterious territory known as the West. As there was no way to settle these rival contentions all were free to prefer what claims they might. Even now, more than two generations later, preposterous boasts are often indulged in. Beginning with the year in question they were settled at once and forever, and the real composition of the human amalgam west of Pennsylvania and Virginia could be analyzed and resolved into its original elements.

Reference to the tables of population will show that the largest number of the original people were drawn from the South and from the Middle States of Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. New England made no important numerical contribution to the original peopling of the Northwest Territory or to the later additions carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. Theodore Roosevelt has pointed out that "the Northwest is essentially a national domain".\* This was true in a broad sense, in spite of the fact that every part of it, from Tennessee and Missouri to the Great Lakes and from Ohio to the Missouri River inclusive, was

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\* *The Winning of the West*, Vol. I, p. 42.



## Slavery Defeated by People Southern in Origin

the legitimate offspring of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. In other words, the people of these States early left their original environments in obedience to the laws of both adventure and industry to settle in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa almost to as great an extent as they had earlier in Kentucky and Tennessee.

It has not been fully realized how closely all these struggling populations were related, or with what harmony they worked in founding new communities whether in the geography and the accident of the future they were to become free or slave: the distinction, not then important, became so general that it has confused the history of the time. Consciously or unconsciously, these people were engaged in a national movement — most of them making their way into this vast empty domain with only the smallest relation to what was to become of the contest between freedom and slavery. Any impression to the contrary is a gloss read into history from later tendencies and events.

### SLAVERY DEFEATED BY PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN ORIGIN

THIS Southern movement continued with little change until 1860. Without the knowledge of either statesmen or students, it had been going on even before the War for Independence. Beginning anew about 1820 — a period fertile in population movements — when foreigners began to come regularly in increasing numbers, when New England had deceived itself about the extent of its general contribution, and when there was a ferment almost everywhere,

## Pioneer Foundations

the new communities had sent representatives into the newer parts further on.

They went first into the great wooded districts of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Kentucky, whence, still in small numbers, they overflowed into the remote prairies of Illinois, long viewed with longing as an escape from the awful tyranny of the forest, and with dread as a plunge into the unknown. It was then and onwards that the original parent communities declined in relative importance in the work of settling and conquering the newer and remoter West. Kentucky and Tennessee thus sent numbers into Ohio and Indiana, which in their turn furnished from their scant quotas a goodly proportion to Illinois and Missouri. In fact, then was begun that movement of people now forth, now back, and again back and forth, all so turning upon their own tracks that the currents of population became more and more human eddies. This process is accurately reflected in the table on page 79.

Naturally, these new communities had to draw mainly from their nearest neighbors, with the result that the majority of those going from the outside were of Southern or Middle State origin. Thus, no returns of direct migrations from these sections can reflect in any true way the real origin of the remoter populations. Only those that had could give, with the result that the peculiar manners, customs, and ideas, and the curious mixtures of people, with the characteristics fixed by the original migrations, long dominated the new West.

It is, however, interesting to remember that an exception

# Slavery Defeated by People Southern in Origin

## WHITES BORN IN THE PIONEER REGION : LIVING IN OTHER STATES OF THE SAME REGION 1850

Born In	Kentucky	Tennessee	Ohio	Indiana	Illinois	Missouri	Michigan	Iowa	Wisconsin	Totals
Kentucky		12609	13829	68651	49588	69694	402	8994	1429	225196
Tennessee	23623		1873	12734	32303	44970	101	4274	449	120327
Ohio	9985	742		120193	64219	12737	14677	30713	11402	264668
Indiana	5898	769	7377		30953	12752	2003	19925	2773	82450
Illinois	1649	872	1415	4173		10917	496	7247	5292	32061
Missouri	1467	920	656	1006	7228		92	3807	1012	16168
Michigan	59	7	2238	1817	2158	295		521	1900	8748
Iowa	59	30	378	407	1511	1366	59		445	4255
Wisconsin	11	8	196	99	1095	123	332	692		2556
Total	42751	15957	27942	209080	189055	152607	18162	76173	24702	756429

## Pioneer Foundations

to this conclusion must be noted. The majority of the Southern people who went into these new free regions sought to escape slavery and its effects. The impulse was often unconscious though none the less potent, and to it is due the fact that all efforts to introduce this inefficient industrial system north of the Ohio were futile. In Indiana and Illinois, where furtive attempts were made, people of Southern origin defeated its extension into districts forbidden by the Ordinance of 1787. This defeat was nowhere effected by those drawn from the old free States because, except for the large number drawn from Pennsylvania, they had not then furnished a sufficient proportion of the population to settle the question. This fact is generally forgotten, from ignorance or design, by the sectional writer about the time though never by the real historian.

### CHANGES IN LANDHOLDING TENURES

THE other system lost in crossing the Ohio was land tenure. The large holding never became a permanent feature in the new settlements or their offshoots. The Virginian custom had been the natural outcome from population origins, from existing labor conditions, and the necessity to deal with specific products hitherto little known : by removal and experiment it was found that the new soil was inhospitable to these and the old methods disappeared so effectually that they obtained no assured hold west of the Alleghenies. The system of working lands to exhaustion and then abandoning them was lost with the dominating or major custom; once brought under the plough, land was

## Changes in Landholding Tenures

kept in cultivation and a varied systematic agriculture developed. This change soon became a fixture and was made easier by the rapid assimilation of these migrants from the slave States united with those that went, in smaller numbers, from the free States — principally from Pennsylvania and from Delaware and Maryland where both conditions and motives were mixed.

Whatever their origin, working together they fixed upon enduring lines the political sentiment of the new communities and created new economic surroundings, and thus exercised upon general development a dominating influence which, in its essence, has never been lost. When the existing causes of differences were removed by the Civil War this power to join and organize was exercised to protect themselves and the country from mischievous fiscal and economic movements. The early assimilation of the people of the West, in the great contests of recent times, accounts for an ingrained conservatism, which, though sometimes thought to be surprising, has been so effective that first and last radical or destructive movements with their accompanying demagogues have generally come to grief.

Accompanying this development was the revolutionary destruction of primogeniture and entail. Under the old conditions of cultivation and ownership, this was hardly possible within the short period that had passed since the bold experiment had been tried. The effects have been, perhaps, more far-reaching than any other economic policy known to our history. In their varied forms they have made the West a region of small holdings cultivated by

## Pioneer Foundations

their owners and have even so reacted that the system has become universal throughout the whole country. It was their success in the newer settlements that, in the course of a generation, broke up the large individual grants that had long held their own in New York. The last to give way were the like tracts in Virginia and other Southern States : these only yielded to the exigencies of a contest which destroyed the labor system that made them possible. The influence that these policies had upon ownership, inheritance, and the general distribution of property was only equalled by the effect of their destruction in producing ambition, industry, conservatism, and the migratory tendency which was to become almost a passion.

### *THE EVER SHIFTING POPULATION*

It is almost impossible now to conceive how the restlessness of the time promoted the imperfect settlement of many new States. Long before the attractions or resources of even one district became known a considerable proportion of the men who had developed it to a simple stage would leave it for another still further afield. Sometimes the increase of population would drive forward those who, determined to avoid even the suspicion of a crowd, sought seclusion. A few neighbors within reasonable distance would promote this just as Daniel Boone moved on from one thinly-settled district into others with no white people at all. Often these removals would be limited to the next county, occasionally only to a new township.

The desire for more land; the freedom to use what to

## The Ever Shifting Population

them seemed a surplus capital tied up in improvements; the removal of family or friends making necessary a search for more congenial associations; neighborhood or family quarrels from which escape was desirable; the demand for better educational facilities; election to some local office, involving a change of occupation or residence, generally thought to be temporary but often permanent — these and many other causes had their influence. Living under primitive conditions, face to face with nature and the wilderness, restless or hermitic men found little of the conventional to hold them. As tradition had not yet taken deep root the seeking of a new environment did not involve the sacrifice of property or sentiment, while it might bring compensation for momentary inconveniences.

The moving back, though less common, was scarcely less complicated. It would have been even more frequent but for the fact that such people were not held in high esteem. They were generally looked upon as running away from their duties and responsibilities. Only a few years and a small measure of stability were required to arouse a spirit of local pride which made each community the equal or the superior of any other. Whatever their type, the movers-back as they were called, were not generally the successful men. They had seldom gained the recognition coveted and so became lonesome.

Homesickness was the most prevalent and disturbing of maladies that afflicted the Pioneer : often, before time could cure it, the patient gave up and returned to his native surroundings. Sometimes a home farm, falling in as an

## Pioneer Foundations

inheritance, or a desire to be near parents in their old age, drew them backwards, while perhaps their neighbors were impelled to go forward. Many women who went out as wives, when widowed had no resources with which to remain and make the fight for themselves and their families and thus were forced to seek more familiar and friendly surroundings. Such persons were in hard case, in a new community, because generally speaking they would be strangers with nobody to advise or to help.

With many of these restless people removal from place to place was often merely a change from one physical environment which they had done little to improve into another hardly more strange. In neither did they recognize duties or obligations or acquire rights. They were too volatile to accept the first, and too careless to inquire about the last. Hence, in their scheme of life there was little to gain by staying and nothing to lose by going. Perhaps there was less of moving on in the later settlements than in their predecessors. So far as then known there was no place to go. On every map, in every description of the region beyond the Missouri, the reader was met by that age-long legend: the "Great American Desert"; until knowledge removed this there was no place to go further West. To the South, slavery made Missouri impossible; to the North, Minnesota was thought to be uninhabitable because of the extreme cold; so that the choice often was either to stay or to move back.

With these forces entering into account, with population constantly shifting, the process of settling down into con-



## The Industrial Forces

ditions resembling permanence was hampered. Assimilation to new surroundings was slow; if it had then been complicated by large numbers of foreign born, the untoward social and political conditions since developed in Wisconsin would have been premature and harmful. As the people, regardless of ultimate origins, were Americans of many generations attached to the same religious forms and speaking no other language than English, they came to know fairly well their own surroundings and their neighbors within about a generation after each new State was opened for settlement.

This was especially true of the almost tempestuous migration which between 1830 and 1860 swept back and forth with such force as to make it the most influential internal movement of population known to our history — perhaps to all history. Coming when it did, those who took part in it and their children, born in the meantime, were ready for the great events of 1861 and the next nine years. The foreign element, always useful, never harmful, making a place for itself in industry and in the body politic produced no serious shock to the accepted standards of life.

### THE INDUSTRIAL FORCES

THERE is little need to analyze the two elements which contributed each in its own way to development over the large area from the mountains westward. The varying origins, ideas, achievements, and ambitions are part of the history of the race. The first belonged distinctively to that English yeomanry whose power to think and to do has

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been clearly demonstrated through all their history. Long practically extinct at home, it survived here during all the vicissitudes of settlement and retained its fine qualities in undiminished vigor. It led the van on the march across a continent; it formed, here as on the scene of its original triumph, the military element necessary to assert or to preserve the rights of property, freedom of person, of conscience, or of nation; it developed our nascent commerce in the whale fisheries, in tobacco, in wood, and, later on, in shipping; it furnished leaders in war, religion, education, statesmanship, science, and invention; but its fine achievement, everywhere, was in laying deep the foundations of the primal industry of agriculture.

Perhaps more than with any other people its humors, like its character, were filtered through the soil. Whatever its times or duties, it fitted into them despite its physical environment. Always holding the best in solution it was both assertive as an aristocracy and the most inclusive of known democracies. It was never a truculent, overbearing class; it was fitted for the task assumed : ready and confident of its ability to carry it through. If the times were narrow or fanatical, it was so too : it had, like all peoples, to do the work of its day, not that of a coming year, generation, or century. It led in the conquest of a continent because its members were strong and vigorous in body, keen in mind, brave and adventurous in spirit, and sufficiently unselfish to consider others. It was jealous of honor, moved by devotion to the public good, and had the courage and initiative to lead and the discipline to follow.

## The Useless Classes

The second class was composed of the descendants of a strong, reliant, perhaps over-confident and opinionated, peasantry from which it was derived. It had little originality or power of leadership, lent itself illy to discipline, and was industrious without much power for realizing upon its labor; potent either for good or evil according as it was drawn or driven by the impulse or the interest of the moment; with good intentions but often powerless of itself to put them into operation; not prone, essentially, to evil nor yet capable of the highest good; if left alone, liable to follow a demagogue or a fanatic, but equally ready to turn and rend him when deceived or endangered : in short, they made up the great mass of average humanity as it ran.

### THE USELESS CLASSES

ANALYSIS of the lowest class is less easy, not from lack of knowledge of its origin and attributes, but for the deeper reason that bound to the Juggernaut car of equality we have lost the power to discriminate as between men and their inherited capacities and limitations. Assuming all to be alike, each, according to this conception, may do what any other does. Devoid of perspective, or of light and shade, the picture is flat without color or form and hence false and misleading. The origin of this class is so clear that it stands out like sunlight.

When the first English immigrations — whose descendants were, in time, to master the continent — were made social conditions were greatly mixed. If it was the day of creative qualities and glory it was also the period of

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harsh penal laws, when three hundred crimes were subject to capital punishment, when the spirit of adventure afforded the powerful many outlets for activity, and an efficient middle class was still in the making. All classes were, of necessity, affected by the mighty movements: political, religious, geographical, social, and economic, then just making themselves felt. The industrious, whatever their social position, could find their way by their own efforts and without difficulty to the New World and once here could maintain themselves and their pride. But these human elements and forces, from the owners and managers of companies down to the humble and industrious drawn to them as migrants, were not equal to the work waiting to be done. Growth was rapid, demand for new products was constant, and, considering the small population, labor was scarce. The Indian, being a savage, was useless as a civilized laborer. However aspiring the few people might be they could not keep up with the demands made upon them.

The three or four millions of enterprising English people at home had their hands full with the tasks of a mighty time: besides, a considerable proportion of the remainder were useless vagabonds or criminals, as burdensome as they were corrupt. In the absence of effective poor laws, they crowded the streets of London and the seaports on the North Sea, the Channel or the West Coast, or were driven into the jails or swarmed into the almshouses. As the juries of the time would not convict of felonies or even of offenses, they became increasingly dangerous both to the State and to order.

## The Useless Classes

The plan was then devised, or rather revived, of selling them into service for a period of years, generally five or seven. Severe regulations were made and in general enforced for the protection of these poor creatures who were unfortunate as well as criminal. Among them, however, were many worthy apprentices and other industrious persons, mostly young men, who were abducted and then carried out to the plantations. In general, those not rescued by their families served their time and became in due course useful mechanics or workers on the tobacco plantations. From the best of those who were under condemnation by the courts there was developed in due time some fair proportion of worthy persons who became industrious citizens and did their part in the development of these primitive communities.

But there was a large contingent that proved to be no less incorrigible in the Colonies than at home. The thieves, the highwaymen, the occasional modest footpad ambitious to become a highwayman, the pickpocket, the burglar, the cracksman, to use the names of the fashionable crimes of violence which at that time led to theft or plunder, were not transformed in nature because they had been sold into temporary slavery where their treatment was far from mild, nor did the formal emancipation that came subsequently fashion them into industrious, honest citizens. The same was true of the wantons who were sent over on like terms, out of brothels or picked up from the streets or the slums of the time. They were scarcely fitted to breed peaceable or useful citizens. So combined the human scum tended

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to remain scum and multiplying to produce after its kind, which grew in number and gradually and surely into the useless, the innately corrupt and ineffective.

After the introduction of negro slavery in 1619 these and their descendants became a class, and finally a type, known as the poor white, a term of contempt that in due time — so expressive was it of actual conditions — was often heard upon the lips of the black himself doomed to perpetual slavery. For probably the first time in history there were human beings low enough in type and in sufficient number to be looked down upon by those who were in a condition of hopeless bondage. In its own habitat this term of reproach had nothing to do with the owning of negro slaves; it was not applied to men merely because they were poor, or white, or ignorant, but for the reason that in the assessment of human and social values they were what they were — practically beneath consideration.

But whatever they were they multiplied; while negro slavery — though never either then or later an efficient industrial agency — made it more difficult for them to find a place in the economic life of the time. Being in the world they had to live somewhere. Their natural decline in physical qualities had sunk them below the commission of serious crimes even if opportunity existed, or if the laws had not in their severity continually repressed them. When they became so numerous that they could no longer eke out a miserable existence on their native soil, they began to move on with the rest. They drifted into the newer South, followed the trail made by ambitious, enterprising

## Types Often Overlooked

migrants across the mountains, down one series of rivers and up another, until their distribution had become universal, as useless in each new place as they had always been in the old ones, or as they have been in any into which they might have made their way. They were as uneasy as the Wandering Jew and far more universal in that westward and northward march which the industrious and the enterprising made from the earliest settlement of Kentucky and Tennessee, through Ohio, Indiana, Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and every other State or district south of Minnesota on across the continent until the distant Pacific was reached.

### TYPES OFTEN OVERLOOKED

I ACCOUNT thus early in my study for this unfortunate human product — in his sordid origin, his shiftlessness, his uncanny personality, his failure, in his predestined part as a parasite — to fit into the surroundings into which he has forced himself, the most pathetic and the least understood figure of our varied history. He is nearly always treated as the distinctive fruit of slavery when, in all his misery and hopelessness he is older than slavery here or anywhere, as old indeed as that awful law of heredity which he must carry as long as he remains on earth.

But it is not only the descendants of criminals and wantons who were transplanted to every colony that contributed to this class and its universal distribution. The economic historian of New England records, with characteristic hesitation and brevity, the fact that the convict was

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sent within her jurisdiction in order to get rid of him. These people were known elsewhere as "redemptioners" because they paid the cost of their transport and settlement by the sale of themselves for a period of generally seven years into the hands of some owner. This system seems to have been more common in Pennsylvania and Maryland than elsewhere; but so insistent was the labor demand that it also prevailed in the colonies not supplied by negro slavery which, though legal everywhere was never really profitable in the North. In the main, the majority of these redemptioners were Continentals who, speaking a strange language, were worthy and industrious peasants, either agriculturists or mechanics, without resources for leaving home, and thus powerless to seek for themselves what they thought and knew were improved opportunities. In them there was a human sediment that settled to the bottom and either constituted or created an element predestined for degeneracy. Taken all together the proportion of the population with a proclivity for the low and the useless was probably greater than it has ever been since and, being nowhere welcome, it was inevitable that it should move on in the wake of the industrious element in order that it might the more surely and easily exercise its parasitic function.

No parent State or community ever cared to admit that it had any considerable number of this class to send out, and no new settlement vaunted itself that it numbered such persons among its sparse population. But there they were, both as emigrants and immigrants, and, various as their



## Types Often Overlooked

origins have been (all of them suspicious and perilous) they have been a constant feature in American life. It has been the more difficult to gain admission of even the existence of this seamy side because of the idea, sedulously maintained, that our great human experiment was conducted without the inclusion of any such types or persons. It has been possible to see the work of all classes, good or bad; but it has not always been easy to discuss, or even to admit, the existence of the bad side. Traditions, sometimes religious, sometimes political, sometimes social, together with a false pride, have tended to conceal the real truth. America by reason of the presence of all classes has been made and kept human — too full of faults to be a Utopia as claimed, and with too many virtues to be an earthly Inferno as sometimes charged.

It has seemed to me necessary to elaborate facts and conclusions which will present themselves at every turn. As the time comes for discussing the subject in its remoter ramifications the foundation will have been laid for understanding a question little comprehended and often overlooked whose existence has even been generally denied. In order to know our American life it is necessary to recognize that if the strong, the industrious, the ambitious, and the courageous blazed a trail across the continent they were accompanied or followed by the useless, the idle, the vicious, and the criminal. The best elements in society were thus compelled to associate with the worst just as they had done throughout the many centuries since the days of Cain and Abel.

## Pioneer Foundations

### THE CHANGES IN TOOLS

REFERENCE has been made to the romance of the prairie during the long march of the Pioneer through a forest wilderness unrelieved of its tyrant trees by other than on a few narrow river bottoms. It was with hope that he pressed on, feeling that relief from the Indian was not only in sight but also that the age-long subjection to the axe and the mattock would be ended; but the prospect was not wholly enticing. The prairie was a mystery of which he was afraid. He had been told that it was not fertile like the lands he and his predecessors had known for many generations. Many stories had reached him even in his seclusion about its climatic conditions, the severity of its unwonted weather, with the absence of shelter and the difficulty of finding or keeping neighbors. So, after he had crossed the Wabash and was in sight of what had always been represented as a new Canaan, when he could really find it he still clung by force of habit to the timber. This existed in the plenty of beneficence along the river bottoms and to these he went, leaving the high and dry prairie lands for later occupation and use when a new and wiser generation should come upon the scene.

This fact was in no way surprising as the men who, since the opening of the Christian era, settled and conquered the whole of the western world, had only known the forest as something to be destroyed before they could enter upon the creative task that confronted them. The high plateau, the steppes, the veldt, the pampas, or the prairies (whatever the name given to plains without trees)

## The Changes in Tools

were very interesting from afar off; but not for residence by man when he went forth to subdue the earth. It was his destiny to blaze a way through the wilderness and then to rejoice in the accomplishment of a great work nobly done; but, in his contests with nature he has generally followed the lines of least resistance.

When, by pushing forward, the prairie was reached, man found that he had everything to learn anew, that not alone must he adjust himself to strange conditions, but that his machines, tools, and animals must also be modified. The cost of maintaining the ox in sufficient numbers for the heavy and patient services that only he could render became prohibitive and so as distances stretched further and further the more alert horse had to be substituted. This of itself was a slow process. The rude plough which with only slight changes had served man's purpose for untold centuries was no longer either sufficient or effective. The threshing machine — in succession to the flail and the ox or the horse — must be perfected in order to handle the increased quantity of grain which one man could grow by the use of the revolutionary plough and necessary to feed a varied population. The reaper was to be invented and perfected by a Virginian farm boy to take the place of the sickle and its successor, the grain cradle — rendering an effective service hitherto unknown and impossible.

Even the ordinary wagon suffered a change when the wilderness had been passed. The heavy wheels, the rigid pole, the wide tires, the awkward body, and the cumbersome bed of the Conestoga and other vehicles still more

## Pioneer Foundations

primitive gave way gradually to lightness and to an ease of handling that changed all the conditions.

If there is one object which our people are accustomed to think original with them it is the covered moving wagon, known familiarly as "the prairie schooner". But, even this convenient device goes back to the Greeks who used it in their spring moving, though its greatest development was a little later among the Celtic tribe, the Cimbri, which was wont to descend in both a peaceful and a war-like way upon the Roman outposts. Mommsen finds this vehicle two centuries before the Christian era and thus describes it :

"It was a marvellous movement, the like of which the Romans had not yet seen; not a predatory expedition of men equipped for the purpose, nor a '*ver sacrum*' of young men migrating to a foreign land, but a migratory people that had set out with their women and children, with their goods and chattels, to seek a new home. The waggon, which had everywhere among the still not fully settled peoples of the north a different importance from what it had among the Hellenes and the Italians, and which universally accompanied the Celts also in their encampments, was among the Cimbri as it were their house, where, beneath the leather covering stretched over it, a place was found for the wife and children and even for the house-dog as well as for the furniture." (*The History of Rome*, Vol. III, p. 431.)

The harness of the horse was simplified and adapted to its new uses. The character of the highways was changed. Resort could no longer be had to the corduroy and plank

## Lingering Influence of the Forest

roads which had been useful and necessary makeshifts in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky where timber was more a nuisance than a useful quantity. Nor was the turnpike, a product of still more civilizing and luxurious conditions in the older communities, even so much as a possibility owing to the absence on the prairie of stone or gravel as materials.

### *LINGERING INFLUENCE OF THE FOREST*

It thus remains true, although the fact is not always remembered, that man having changed or modified himself by his long and toilsome journey had to meet new conditions with new implements and methods, thus forcing the conclusion that the great inventions in agricultural machinery could not be perfected until the prairie made them a necessity by furnishing a field fitted for their use. When the time came that one man, cultivating more than double the acreage formerly possible, could bring into existence even more than a doubled product while the number of laborers had not grown in proportion to demand, then human ingenuity which depends wholly upon the need for it came into play. This not only led to the natural, almost abnormal, increase in products within the area which had furnished the impulse for this movement, but it revolutionized culture and farm values and conditions all over the civilized world including the growth of population. In spite of these results, not then foreseen, the Pioneer shrank from the novel task before him : he shuddered as he looked into the unknown.

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The natural result of this distrust of the prairie was that the settler did not push through the timbered regions of any given State where both varieties of land were known to exist. It was only when southern and eastern Indiana were well filled with populations fairly large for the time that the prairie areas covering the northern and north-western parts of the State were settled mainly by those from other counties who by this time had learned the advantages offered by another move. In Illinois the heavily wooded portion in the South (then and later included in the general nickname of Egypt) was pretty well settled; while the distinctly prairie parts, west of the Wabash, in the central and northern districts, which, as experience was to show, were among the most fertile areas in the world, were neglected or avoided. In both these States political control was long lodged almost exclusively in the wooded counties—a condition little changed until the Civil War cast its shadow upon the horizon.

It was not only true that the influence of the forest dominated in different parts of the same States but the tendency—amounting almost to a determination—to avoid the prairie, except when forced upon it, in the swarming processes of the day was shown in Michigan and Wisconsin. These districts filled up slowly, at first because they lay outside the path of the migrating populations of the time, namely those of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. The natural sources of supply for these northern districts were New England and New York, whose populations long

## Lingering Influence of the Forest

hesitated, owing to a lack both of surplus numbers and of natural lines of approach to push into the remoter West. For the time their task lay between the Hudson and the Great Lakes. When between 1840 and 1850 they began to move it was with such a rush that the newer timbered States were occupied with marvellous rapidity — without parallel in history before that date.

The flood of foreign immigration had risen by this time, but with all the attraction and the advertisement of the prairie its representatives did not then pass in any considerable number or proportion through the woods to seek the land where a rude home, a pair of oxen or horses, and a plough, would enable the settler to begin immediately the profitable cultivation of a soil of almost exhaustless fertility. In other words, the taste for the prairie long remained artificial and had to be acquired. The original populations south of the Delaware were fated to acquire it first, mainly because if they continued on their way West along natural lines they finally reached the prairie and there was nothing else to do but either to go on or to turn back. The tables of nativities of internal migrants for 1850 show that a considerable proportion did go back over their tracks when the prospect was opened of leaving their beloved forests. Within the period under study, those north of the Delaware did not acquire the prairie habit — a fact which had a profound influence upon the political and social life of the country west of the Wabash and north of the Grand Prairie in Illinois.

## Pioneer Foundations

The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, in reply to the writer's inquiries, has made the following estimate of the relative amounts, prior to white settlement, of forest and prairie in the States included in various phases of this study :

<i>State</i>	<i>Original Forest Area</i>	<i>Prairie Area</i>
Kentucky	90 per cent.	10 per cent.
Tennessee	90 per cent.	10 per cent.
Ohio	90 per cent.	10 per cent.
Indiana	98 per cent.	2 per cent.
Illinois	25 per cent.	75 per cent.
Missouri	60 per cent.	40 per cent.
Michigan	Practically All	
Iowa	15 per cent.	85 per cent.
Wisconsin	94 per cent.	6 per cent.
Minnesota	55 per cent.	45 per cent.

This general law operated in Iowa when it was reached in due course. In 1840 the prairie had not been touched; in 1850, there were nearly two hundred thousand people in the State of whom probably not ten per cent had settled on the prairie proper. The remainder had started at the mouths of the rivers flowing into the Mississippi and were creeping upward along their banks where the timber and the bottom lands joined. It was then that the prairie revealed itself, the bottom lands not being sufficient to give scope to the energies of the increasing population.

It was the first time that the Pioneer had had an opportunity to make himself a conservator of natural resources. The passion for clearing timber had been checked and the alternative system of combining the natural meadows with the woods, until no farm was complete that did not contain a share of both, had an almost controlling influence upon the final settlement and use of the prairies



## Who Were the People

which it was soon found covered the ridges, whether wide or narrow, between any two of the streams which ran almost parallel on their way to a distant outlet. The change, once it was found feasible, was made with great rapidity; so that by the census of 1860 probably more than half of the population, still strictly agricultural, of 674,913, was living contentedly and prosperously upon the nearest uplands. The American prairie had found itself.

### WHO WERE THE PEOPLE

It is pertinent to ask about the adventurous people who, marching towards the Mississippi, in a thin procession stretching from the Atlantic coast and even beyond pressed into new and strange environments. In the period between June, 1833, when the quadrilateral known as Iowa was opened for settlement and 1870 the time chosen for closing this study what did they attempt to do? What were their origins, ideals, motives, strengths, weaknesses? How had they fused themselves? Within this period, short within itself, but as events marched later relatively a long time in the life of their country and the world, what had they made of their opportunities?

In organized society it takes at least this long so to fashion shifting humanity that it shall have some character and be ready to make and to take its place in the economy of political and social development. Until it has done this it remains a collection of strangers, drawn from many diverse sources, a settlement, rude but never complete, a ceaseless procession of movers on or movers back rather

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than a firm-knit community with fixed purposes and settled characteristics. Every American colony or State, however old, has passed through this stage : some of them have developed strong traits and have done their full part in the somewhat haphazard work of modern growth; others, without a rational place of their own, were for a long time drags upon the leaders or the whole with little to justify existence or name.

In its foundation-laying days probably no community known to modern life was ever drawn from American sources more heterogeneous than those which, first and last, made up the population of the last in the series of the true Pioneer States. Especially in the case of Iowa it differed from its predecessors in that the Indian was never a figure. The white man's grim conquest of that ruthless race was completed by an even more merciless enemy. The Indian could not exist much less fight on the prairie; it was made for agriculture, the industry that he was never to master. When there was no game he could do nothing but march across his three hundred miles of land, swim or row across the Missouri River, in order to disappear towards the setting sun or to enter a herd with his fellows on a reservation.

The latest settler had not to make his habitation on a battlefield or to live behind a stockade : every ounce of his effort was available for his assumed task. He went to his new home, not to wait for some servant to do his bidding, as had generally been the case originally in the oldest colonies, but willing and determined to do it himself. He was

## Who Were the People

no longer the bond-servant of a primeval forest — something useful only when destroyed — or a worker familiar with the axe and the mattock. No dream of enslaving his fellow-men, white or black, ever disturbed his hours either sleeping or waking. No rude or noisy agitation pierced his ear with its raucous sounds : novel public problems were not for him, so that he had little to be agitated about; he had no demagogues or muckrakers who, by wild, idle chatter, could relive upon his votes or his industry. He no more questioned the wisdom and perfection of the ideas and institutions inherited from his ancestors or developed by himself during his tiresome journey through more than a thousand miles of wilderness, than he did the religion that he professed and tried to practice.

When the time came for peopling Iowa it was able to draw from a wider area and a greater variety of population. It had all that its predecessors enjoyed, and in addition its own neighbors almost as raw and wild as itself, which, with only a small number of people — not enough for more than a sprinkling over the whole surface, but with even more than the usual restlessness and desire for novelty to drive them on — to furnish settlers. A proportion assumed that they might prosper better and quicker by going further. It has been a strange spectacle throughout the period of settlement, and, in spite of the fact that land was the only plentiful article to be had, when the man with a rude house and a small piece of ground cleared perhaps as the result of three to five years of effort, nearly always a seller could find a buyer.

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The tide of humanity was so regular that a family would come suddenly upon a place that struck the fancy of its members, so that another family, supposed fixtures in their little home, on a given morning, might by the following day, have taken their places in the never-ending procession of movers often repeating, before they had gone twenty miles, the process of their purchaser. Everything was for sale : land, house, ferries, mills, implements, grain, horses, cattle — all things, movable or immovable, except human beings, dogs, and the wagons useful for going on were included in this category.

### THE PROCESSIONS OF SETTLERS

MOVERS had from long custom grown into essentially distinct and well known classes. There were the families that started from an old home well-equipped with everything to make them comfortable, knowing their destination and just what they wanted and how to get it. They knew the roads, the fords, the approximate time the journey would take and all that could give them the information necessary for their purpose. They were provident, with needed supplies of everything from food to money, comfortable beds to be spread in or under their covered wagons, which were drawn by strong oxen or horses, with cows of fair quality generally driven by the boys and girls — always barefoot in season and sometimes out of it. Such a family would often know, through relatives and friends, even the piece of land it would finally enter or buy, and upon arrival would be ready to begin the building of the necessary house.

## The Processions of Settlers

They soon found themselves in a caravan made up of people like themselves coming from every quarter, but bound often for as many ultimate neighborhoods as there were families. As their routes often lay together for weeks they became friends, often intermarrying, exchanging experiences, seeds, implements, or breeding animals, selling some part of an outfit no longer needed, as they dropped out at their destined settlements or stopped with friends for the winter.

In nearly all cases, movers of this class would stop on Sunday not only for rest but for religious services. In most groups there would be a minister, a local preacher, or exhorter, and one or more class leaders. Perhaps the average rate of progress among this class of movers — there was no other genuine word to describe the peregrinating Pioneer — would be about eight or ten miles a day, omitting Sundays and the long stops often made necessary by storms or by the swollen smaller streams or insufficient facilities for crossing the larger rivers. When a route was opened demand and supply met each other and a ferry would soon be improvised and ready for use.

Amongst this type of movers there was almost nothing of rowdiness. If this developed in individuals it was proof positive that they were in the wrong company; they would drop out and find a place among their own. These people were yeoman making their way to new homes with the dignity and simplicity shown by their remote ancestors, the Crusaders, when marching to battle. They looked upon themselves as having a mission, as workers in a great

## Pioneer Foundations

cause. However widely separated such persons or families might be in origin or at the end of their respective journeys, valued friendships had been formed and these would often remain for the rest of their lives agreeable memories or valuable connections. Later in life they would meet in political conventions, in religious assemblies, or in movements looking to general improvement or the bettering of material or moral conditions.

On the way, in crossing rivers or in extricating each other's wagons that had stalled on roads often almost impassable the more prosperous were naturally helpful at every turn. They were coöperators in the initial tasks incident to the making of States. What they had been in their starting places, what they were on their common adventures over these stretches of wilderness and prairie, they were to remain when once they found a place where land, water, timber, probable neighbors, possible or existing schools, and satisfactory religious facilities combined to suit their needs or fancies.

If all these things were not found at their destined stopping places they would go further. No large proportion of this class belonged to the moving-back kind. But, if these men helped each other they were scarcely less gracious to the types both poorer and different from themselves. There was ample need for this aid because the thin, poor animals, the creaking wagons, sadly worn when starting, required frequent aids to get forward. Neighborliness of this order did not depend upon the quality of the men but upon the need for it, though, in spite of this, the social lines almost

## Other Types of Movers

unconsciously to all were drawn pretty tight. An act of the Good Samaritan order did not mean much beyond temporary help: the figurative wine and oil that was necessary in the case.

### OTHER TYPES OF MOVERS

ANOTHER kind of caravan going over the same road was almost entirely different. The horses or oxen were inferior in quality, sometimes a cow was hitched with an ox or a horse, the wagon covers were ragged or dirty, the children would almost certainly be walking, many of the women were slatterns, some of the men were prone to drink, and a rude coarse profanity was almost general. Some poor cows or heifers would generally be led or driven, and in many cases there were swine carried on the wagon or driven. There was generally a plentiful supply of dogs — of the variety known as yellow — curs sunk into the lowest degree of mongrelism.

These people were not of the lowest or the poorest and some small proportion had in them the possibilities of improvement. They might best be classed as the indifferent. As a type, neither origin nor ambition fitted them to look forward to any other fate than that of following in the wake of the more enterprising. They made still slower progress through the wilderness or across the prairies, if their destination carried them so far. As a rule they did not know or much care where they went. Progress was made by slow degrees, and with more or less of blind, unreasoning confidence. They were fatalists, blown hither

## Pioneer Foundations

and thither without any special purpose in their own minds. To them, one place was about the same as another. They could seldom hope to buy more than a small holding of land if any, and so in the awful plethora of potential farms they were generally doomed to be tenants or hired hands.

A third class of migrants fell far below the second; that large contingent recruited from everywhere, though known in the South whether at home or on the move by the generic name of poor whites. Nothing like all were drawn from the South, but the majority derived, either in themselves or their ancestors, directly or indirectly, mainly the latter, from Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, or Pennsylvania. These people were lower in origin, type, morals, and efficiency than anything known in the new and comparatively small urban communities of the time. While every place was then rural, these specimens of humanity hovered on the outskirts of the towns and villages then found, perhaps in greater proportion, when numbers are considered, than at any later period.

For America, the land of plenty, they were poor almost beyond ability to imagine. They, like the other two classes, attracted only their own; but, more than the others they traveled in companies drawn from the same general neighborhood or district. It seemed that their misery always loved the company that by no chance would include the industrious or ambitious side of humanity. They started often from a given place or district without aim, and by some strange means would get forward by a succession of leaps of from thirty to fifty miles in a year or often no



## Other Types of Movers

further than into an adjacent county. But, as their numbers were sufficient to maintain on the road a supply of their own they gave the impression that they were really journeying with some semblance of plan or design.

Their outfit scarcely merited consideration by the real Pioneer. They did not need much preparation to cut themselves loose from their sordid surroundings in the woods, on the edge of one string of villages, in order to seek equally miserable conditions in a series of shanties only a few miles or a few townships or counties further on; but going, mainly on foot and moving almost every alternate spring or fall, they would probably reach the same ultimate destination along with the orderly, settled population which left the same neighborhoods years later. It made little difference what particular segment or contingent might arrive to become parasites on the industrious; they were what they were no matter how many steps they took or how many years or generations might be required to carry them from their place of origin. As they had no destination they were always found at any given point after the industrious had stopped. They needed no information about a given district; all they wanted to know was that somebody with industry and the modest property that it would represent had gone ahead of them. If as individuals they did not stay long, in the order of their nature and in the mass there were fit and characteristic successors to take their places. They carried this interesting process across a great continent, leaving behind them everywhere, North as well as South, a trail of poverty, misery, disease, and immorality.

## Pioneer Foundations

These processions of humanity moved across a continent, passing or repassing on the way many like individuals and occasionally a group turning on their tracks each doing after its kind. Their fates were to be as various as their origins. One class was destined to become the founders of States, to furnish leaders in thousands of neighborhoods, then not even in embryo, to unite in every good work and, through representatives in its own and succeeding generations, to do a service important beyond measure for society and themselves. It had occasional losses through degeneracy, and now and then in the working of the process of regeneration it drew a few timid, uncertain recruits from below; but the number of these was small in either case.

The second remained what it began, indifferent, well-meaning enough but with little originality or initiative: restless, even long after the new States had come into settled conditions and character; redeemed, now and then, by some family or individual who, overcoming environment, and perhaps asserting an heredity, unsuspected even by himself would do something worthy of the opportunities awaiting the industry of all. There were so many of these that with little power of choice it was difficult for them with their want of concentration to decide whether this or that opportunity should be embraced.

The third was as constant a body as the other two. It was, in effect, unchangeable. If anything, its uselessness was cumulative because the general progress of the time while benefiting those above passed over these lower types without power to arouse them from lethargy.

*LAND AND THE POPULATION*



## PEEPING OVER THE RIVER AT THE PRAIRIE

IF these settlers moving to the westward at varying rates of speed in the three processions already described could have seen or even have imagined the appearance and the prospects of the territory beyond the great river upon whose banks they stood, they would have viewed one of the most agreeable natural landscapes ever presented to human eyes. Here were fifty-five thousand square miles of land with a river system seldom equalled, with fugitive bodies of timber fairly distributed, ample river bottoms or meadows and prairies in larger proportion than in any area previously looked upon by the white man with an idea of permanent settlement.\* On their way they had passed through primeval forests where irregular clearings had been made; towards the end of their journey they had obtained a dim idea of what the long-expected, long-dreaded prairie was really like; but, in the main they had seen only those wooded districts in which the red man had been the one

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\* In Iowa the prairie formerly covered the greater part of the surface of the state. The area has been variously estimated at from sixteen-seventeenths to four-fifths, but a careful compilation of available records and observations in the field indicates that a little more than seven-eighths of the surface was prairie, leaving less than one-eighth for the forest area, which, however, included the thickets bordering streams, and the scrub-oak thickets in various parts of the state, which should scarcely be dignified by being called forests.—Professor Bohumil Shimek's *The Prairie*, p. 170.

## Pioneer Foundations

dread, the imminent peril. They stood upon the edge of a great State of the future, not even yet a Territory in its own right nor with an assured name. Some small part had just been acquired from the Indians, though years were to pass before they would abandon it entirely. Even then of the three or four thousand red men wandering over a small part of the area, there was no open hostility to the white man, and no battles either open or in ambush were necessary in order to begin in his capacity as American Pioneer the conquest of that piece of earth lying around him.

Even then, however sharp the eyes of this man, he could not have pierced beyond the heavily-timbered border along the river upon whose waters he looked. He could not realize the grandeur of the prairies that lay behind the veil thus hung before him. He did not know and, indeed, from his training did not care to know these rolling plains. He was still afraid of them. With no tree, hardly a shrub in sight, great waves of grass nodding to the breeze on every hill and in every valley, stretching like unto the sea far beyond the horizon they presented a picture that had in it all the elements of a grand, majestic beauty : but it did not attract him because he did not yet know of its existence and imagination had not revealed its attractiveness. He had crossed the prairies of Illinois, but in the regions he had traversed they were mainly flat and uninteresting compared with those that lay beyond the Father of Waters. Looking at the bluffs opposite, he might have seen an average elevation, taking the Western bank of the

## Peeping Over the River at the Prairie

river as a whole, of about five hundred feet above sea-level. He did not know that when he should finally climb to the highest point on this great plateau, between two noble rivers, he would have gradually risen, with nothing resembling a mountain, until, on the watershed between the upper Des Moines and the Missouri, he would look out from an elevation of about sixteen hundred feet.

The configuration of this area is such that its streams, beginning with the noble Des Moines which forms part of the southern boundary, and northward every few miles there flows into the Mississippi some river, large or small, running almost parallel with the others. So regular is the aspect they present as viewed on the map that if it had been before the eye of the Indian when he was starting his method of planting corn in regular rows he might have taken his plans from them or they might almost prove that the great floes moving out in the ice ages leaving these gigantic furrows behind them had worked upon a regular geometrical plan. It was these water courses that the settler was to seek and then to follow — always traveling towards sources, always hugging the wide meadows to be found on one or the other bank. Thus he did not entirely get away from his beloved forests, even if he escaped the awful penalty of destroying them before he could hope to make a home.

But the approach to this district did not proceed uniformly from the great river as a starting point. As had been the case with the State immediately east, settlement drifted in from the South. Indeed it had to do this because

## Pioneer Foundations

not only here did the pushing populations lie, but, as already cited, they had been moving steadily for more than a half century into the newer regions or districts opened for settlement. They were situated on the direct lines of travel from the southern settlements in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and in large numbers from Missouri where slavery tended to generate the industrial unrest that had manifested itself in the older slave States. After crossing the Mississippi the rivers had to be approached from the south in order to ascend and thus make headway towards the sources which were always the settler's goal. It was impossible for population to pierce the interior in any considerable number from points above parallel forty-two north latitude which divides the State into two almost exactly equal parts.

### STILL SKIRTING THE WOODS

WHEN in 1840 the first Federal Census was taken in Iowa only six of the eighteen organized counties lay north of this line. Of the 42,924 people then living in the Territory only sixteen per cent were in the north; and half of these were in the single county of Dubuque whither the lead mines across the river in Illinois had drawn an early settlement. Until the whole State was settled this northern segment drew perhaps a majority of its recruits from the southern half as year after year the people of the latter pushed on up stream. This proportion did not change between 1840 and 1850 in spite of the steady flow, during this period, of people from all over the Union and a considerable contingent of foreigners.



## Still Skirting the Woods

In the latter census year the northern half increased its proportion to only sixteen and one-half per cent in a total population of 192,214. These were found in eighteen of the forty-nine counties. To a large extent this was due to avoidance of the prairie of which the northern part was composed in much the greater measure. In the practical absence of timber for buildings and fuel, effective settlements on these prairies were next to impossible until the railroad came near enough to bring in lumber and fuel from the outside—for where no timber was found there was no known coal to be mined. Between 1850 and 1860 the proportion in the north increased to thirty-one-and-a-half per cent, but during the intervening years probably half of the people who changed the ratio had been drawn from the South. This was maintaining the process of moving on: thus proving their consistency as Pioneers, and also emphasizing anew before the change in transportation conditions the policy of going up the streams.

This tendency to ascend streams—so constant throughout history as a factor in settlement and warfare—is better illustrated in Iowa than in any State except Ohio. In 1840 the fringe of population in the southeastern quarter of the State was thickest along the Des Moines where it had reached a width of about three regulation counties back from the Mississippi. This was natural for the reason that a double contingent of potential migrants lay directly behind this corner of the Territory, one from Illinois, mainly from the southern half, and the other from Missouri. It was also on the direct line of travel, so far as such a thing

## Pioneer Foundations

could be said to exist, behind which lay the major part of the restless population in the newer States and through which, as if it were a mountain pass, also must come that from the regions east of the Alleghenies, as well as those south of the Ohio. Only a short distance away were the Skunk and the Maquoketa rivers which, though small, drained fertile attractive districts. Combined with the Iowa River not far away, and its larger affluent, the Red Cedar, this part of the aspiring settlement had more magnetic power in and of itself than would have been possible elsewhere; so that here again the fringe, though somewhat thinner, had about the same width of three counties.

Above parallel forty-two north the streams were smaller, so that by the period mentioned the fringe back from the Mississippi along the Wapsipinicon, the Turkey, and the Upper Iowa was about a single county in width in spite of the fact that beyond these lay enormous bodies of prairie, destined in another thirty years to reveal their fertility and their capacity for making homes of the most prosperous kind. Even to this day no urban community considerable in numbers has found there a lodging place.

Up to the next census period, 1850, the same general conditions continued. The fringe gradually widened and became thicker in texture until it had extended entirely across the State from east to west and had begun an enflading movement by creeping up the streams which found their outlet in the Missouri. The same process was repeated, even more rapidly, along the other streams enumerated until practically all of the counties in the lower seg-

## The Land Policy Carried Out

ment of the State had been organized and had some population however thinly distributed. By 1860 the counties, practically as they now exist, had organized government and had started on their way to that substantial equality in population to which, outside a few with small urban communities, they have ever since inclined.

### *THE LAND POLICY CARRIED OUT*

As only part of the land in the Territory had been purchased by the government, it required an effort for the surveyor so to keep ahead of the settler that the latter would find the lines, being those of the Congressional township, and make provision against the disputes as to titles that had been common in the older American settlements under the system of metes and bounds. Even the occasional delinquency interfered little in the case of Iowa. During the first few years progress was slow. The people could not go far from their bases of supply. Where the settler went, there, too, must go saw and grist mills, smithies of every kind, the carpenter, and those contributing industries without which advance was impossible. As a rule some sort of formal government was not far away: the township was almost as much of a necessity as the county — roads and schools being dependent upon it.

The fact cannot be too often emphasized that individual initiative and effort peopled the West. As a result, settlement seldom proceeded by colonies, but, in a newly-organized county, was pretty evenly distributed along its streams thus making the larger coöperation a necessity. These dif-

## Pioneer Foundations

fused neighborhoods could not consolidate their population. The old Indian peril being removed there was nothing left to enforce this. Thus, settlement, when completed, had involved a good deal of duplicated effort as in the formative days. Roads connecting one thinly peopled neighborhood with another had to be made; schools, with almost no pupils, must have teachers; and perhaps two or three religious services were maintained where for the number of worshippers one would have amply sufficed.

These scattered settlements had to be fairly supplied with facilities before there could be anything like coherence. In the majority of cases this work was done by the earliest comers whose united, though scarcely organized, efforts drew people from older or original settlements. This promoted something like an orderly social life among persons already fairly congenial and with some knowledge of one another, so that it was seldom, after the first year or so, that moving on meant going entirely among strangers. The advance of a township a year, which had been the average from the beginning, was markedly accelerated after the prairie was either reached or in sight. The impediments were reduced in numbers and seriousness, while the pressure upon the vacant lands from the rear was increased.

It seems difficult now as we look back upon the settlement of these vacant areas to realize that in most of the neighborhoods from which these restless people moved on, land, fairly under cultivation, with buildings and fences, had not reached an average value of more than a few dollars an acre. And yet, large numbers would move from three

## The Land Policy Carried Out

hundred to five hundred miles distant in order to find land at prices ranging from \$1.25 to \$5.00 an acre and so subject themselves to the hardships, perhaps for the second time in their lives, of the most primitive of Pioneers. These were the people who, led by the attraction of really cheap land, made settlement and conquest possible many years before they would have come in the natural course of events.

A vast deal of nonsense has been uttered about the land policy of the United States: the cheapness of price; the bestowal for homesteads; the grants to railroads, canals, and other public improvements. It is forgotten that there was nothing but land, which of itself has not the smallest value. The late James J. Hill, one of the wise men of his time, never pronounced a truer dictum than that "Land without population is a wilderness and population without land is a mob." No form of property is so dependent as land upon the application of mind and the magic touch of muscle and capital to make it useful or valuable either to individuals or to society.

It may also be said that with all the modern talk about conservation the highest example of this policy throughout all ages has been the destruction of the forest. The fact is often overlooked that it is impossible to cover the same ground with both trees and men; so that the lament about the destruction of timber is a regret for what was both necessary and beneficent. The cheap talk of how much could have been done for humanity; the speculations about how rich everybody might have been made, all belong to

## Pioneer Foundations

the domain of unrelieved nonsense. If it had been saved there would have been no people to use it or to make or share in its values. Only population with its mind and its toil could give usefulness and value to the residue, and all arguments looking to a different conclusion are either suggested by ignorance or by a desire to mislead.

### THE LAND SPECULATOR

HOWEVER rapid migration might be, or however great in numbers, the Pioneer along his entire line of march could never get to the land offices of a given district earlier than the so-called speculator who, once there, seemed to have a knowledge almost intuitive about the best lands as well as those tracts which were keys to others. He knew how to select along the streams the timber that would control the meadow on the opposite bank, or the narrow ridge behind it; so that without exhausting his capital by over-heavy investments, he could hope to sell at a profit that he might turn over his money oftener. At this stage of settlement neither he nor the Pioneer farmer was inclined to waste time or thought upon the prairie. He simply used his knowledge to take up public lands at the fixed market price. As there has never been a time in the history of Pioneer settlement when land could be purchased from anybody but the government there could be no favoritism\*

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The title conveyed by the latter (i.e., the Indian) thus enured to the benefit of the colonies : it having been our policy, both before and since the Revolution, not to permit any of our citizens to purchase individually land from the savages. — Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*, Vol. I, 267.

## The Land Speculator

except what might come from bribing a surveyor or gaining some petty advantage through relations with a land agent. This was not possible, on any considerable scale, so that, except for the advantage possessed by the man who had enough money to pay for several sections from a township so carefully distributed as to give him control of the best lands — those which could be opened up with the least labor and the best advantage in their relation to streams and future markets — there was fair play for all comers. After all, such a buyer had, like the settler, to take his chances. If he played a grab game he might find that he had overlooked or neglected other attractive districts only a few miles further on. He could neither buy in both places nor sell back to or exchange with the government, thus hedging upon his own mistakes. He had to deal with the law of averages which restricted the advance to a comparatively small area each year, and, generally speaking, with this as a guide he was fairly safe.

For the most part the wholesale land buyer who entered these tracts across the line of settlement was the agent of investors in remote financial centers, lands thus passing into the hands of the always suspected absentee owner. The difference between their incidence and others lay in the fact that they bought, almost uniformly, for early realization instead of improvement by themselves or prospective owners or tenants. But, in spite of the obloquy of the earliest of actual settlers, the speculator was, perhaps, the most potent of all the agencies in opening to settlement a vast area by men who preferred to pay more for choice

## Pioneer Foundations

land and thus to make their way slowly and carefully rather than rush in without an opportunity to know just where they were going or what they were getting.

Townships and counties were filled up gradually with some of the best lands awaiting the second contingent of comers who were likely to be of higher quality, and to have more resources and better preparation for their tasks than the vanguard. The best men, those destined on the small scale of their lives to develop powers of real leadership, preferred to look about and to seek and find not only the land but the people that would give scope to their abilities.

Sometimes the land speculator made mistakes even more serious than those mentioned. He could not foresee, any more than others, panics like those of 1837 or 1857; when they came he either had to sell his land at reduced prices, or to hold it at a heavy risk and cost until the crisis was over. In the latter case, he found himself surrounded by actual settlers, who, wielding the taxing power, raised the assessments on his wild lands to more than double, often more than quadruple, those made upon their own adjacent farms by this time improved with buildings, fences, and everything that fitted them to yield a return upon the labor and thought invested in them. In thousands of such cases the speculator in self-defense (after paying over a series of years far more than his proportion of taxes for making roads, or fords, or for building bridges, schoolhouses, court-houses, and all the paraphernalia of a going community) would finally be forced to sell at a low price the remnant of his holdings and to quit that particular neighborhood.



## The Size of Holdings

On the whole and in the long run he no doubt made a profit, but the foundations were not laid for any considerable number of the large, quickly gathered fortunes accumulated during the past century.

### THE SIZE OF HOLDINGS

THE settler was seldom able to buy or enter more than a quarter section of land, the hundred and sixty acres which during the wars with England and Mexico had been fixed as a sort of maximum grant to volunteer soldiers. Of the latter, it may be said, that few warrants issued by the government were used by their beneficiaries to make actual settlers of themselves. They were a commodity for which, as they passed from hand to hand, there was a market. Out of them, no doubt, comfortable returns were yielded to the men who purchased in sufficient numbers to make them an object. On the other hand, many of the buyers were persons who used warrants to get for themselves eligibly-situated tracts at prices under what they would have been compelled to pay if they had made entries in the regular way. By the time that the turn of the remoter States came, the unwholesome methods of the eighteenth-thirties — when there was a tendency to make the public lands an economic plaything — had passed away so that the innumerable homes soon to dot the landscape over great stretches of wilderness and prairie were acquired in the main with little to taint them, even when judged by the strictest standards of morals.

When looked at from the point of view of southern

## Pioneer Foundations

plantations or those in other countries, there were practically no large holdings. As a rule, men sought to obtain only as much as they could manage when their sons should grow to manhood. In Iowa, after the prairie with its ease of cultivation was recognized, a quarter of a section was a large farm : perhaps so long as the settler hugged the timber and depended upon the river bottoms for his cultivated fields, the average amount of land actually or even potentially arable would not be more than half of this because the wood lot supplemented the plough land and in the absence of markets provided work for the winter. For hay some area of the natural wild grasses would be fenced off so that there was no necessity for the tame grasses. A cultivated farm meant one growing cereals and also the natural pasture lot and the necessary wood lot. Even the most industrious and provident man, watchful lest he should spread out beyond his resources, so planned his farm that there would be as little waste as possible. In most cases, he must so rotate crops that by keeping himself always at work — and this was his aim — he could take care of his land, improve the quality of its cultivation, and look forward to the time when he might safely enlarge his holdings.

There was, however, little of that strong tendency to lay field to field which has always been imputed as a distinct fault of the farmer, and has now become an agrarian tendency even on the areas under consideration. When by added resources, or by the increase of his family, more land could be managed on economic lines, he could buy

## The Size of Holdings

the holding of some dissatisfied or unsuccessful neighbor or sell his farm on favorable terms and either buy a larger run-down place nearby or go a few miles further on, thus meeting his own requirements without running into debt or undertaking an impossible task.

In the earliest days, hired labor was almost out of the question; but for the coöperative system under which men helped each other the average size of the fairly well-managed farms would have been still smaller and the rewards longer deferred. But they were real neighbors who, working together, were able to maintain a high standard and build up a large number of farms having about the same general position or standing.

These conclusions, like all others either of social or industrial concern, apply to the best class of settlers. Below them was the second class either with smaller farms or with inefficient cultivation which in the end meant the same thing. They were dotted here and there with holdings perhaps half the size, often badly equipped and tended. As a class, these owners were industrious but lacking in the system and forethought of their neighbors. They were likely to take a long time in improving their places or in getting out of debt when once they became involved in it. They were apt to become discouraged and to sell out to their neighbors when, in due course, these were ready to expand. There was something, almost indefinable, which separated these men and their families from other types. It was not lack of opportunity nor conscious caste: it was a difference innate and unconquerable. It was character.

## Pioneer Foundations

### TENANTS AND HIRED HANDS

A THIRD division or class was the tenant, who is hard to define because, in fact, his class was composed of two orders of men, each dependent upon the ampler resources or the greater enterprise of neighbors. As the latter brought into cultivation more land than they could tend, help was needed. This was found in the tenant who, with capacity and willingness to work, with enough of savings to raise or buy a pair of horses but not enough to purchase land and build a house, was ready to hire and work a farm on the shares : the perpetuation under new conditions of the metayer system whose origin is lost in the mists of history. It was not uniformly a strictly equal division between landlord and tenant, but varied with work done or facilities provided. That a man was a tenant did not prove that he had not social standing of as good or as honorable origin as the most prosperous farmer. Often he belonged to the same families, associated without distinction, undertook the same work for the community, and was held in equal esteem. This kind of tenant soon became a landowner and upheld with all the success and pride of his type the standard of the yeoman to whom he really belonged.

The other type of tenant had a poorer outfit and was less industrious. The two kinds of families had in them curious inherent differences. They might or might not be successful with the chances rather against both of them. They were likely to become so tired out and discouraged that they would join the movers-back. In general, if they reached success it was qualified by the limitation that they

## Tenants and Hired Hands

took their places permanently as renters so that whatever progress they might make or expect it would still be in this capacity and not in those with ambitions, chances, outlook, and assured getting on in the world.

In like manner there were two kinds of hired hands. The first was hard-working : often as well-connected as anybody in the community, with average advantages, but using what he had to good purpose with a determination to make the best of himself however long it might take or whatever struggle or hardship might be involved. He started without resources, but with credit; and even though he had no team, not even a single horse, he was ready in the absence of any kind of possessions to aver that he was "chock-full of day's works." If his strength held out he soon made his way, acquired property, married fittingly, and was so started on the road to prosperity and usefulness that in due time he took his place among the useful, active citizens about him. There was no caste to keep him down. If he could come up, nobody said him nay but everybody welcomed and helped him.

The other type of hired hand suggested the yellow primrose : "only that and nothing more". He had few ambitions, only the industry that was necessary to exist, not to live; perhaps he was lacking in honesty, in short, in the theological language of the time, he was the hired hand created and predestined from the beginning of the world. It was all that he knew how to be, could be, or hoped to be.

These classes — they are so different in origin and texture that no other word will describe them — having started

## Pioneer Foundations

with us in this analysis of a Pioneer community must go along as they have traveled down history, always together though always separate. None of the commonplaces of Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence could ever fuse them together or make them, either temporarily or permanently, other than what they were. None was the creation of privilege — because privilege breaks down by the inherent weakness of its beneficiaries — nor was any the creature of oppression — which breaks down with equal certainty by the resistance of its victims if they have the necessary persistence and character.

### THE NATIVE GROUPS

THE people of these first settlements were perhaps more homogeneous in origin, character, and outlook than those who have at any time attempted the making of a new State. They had not only the attachment to American ideals and realities which gave them a common outlook upon life, but they knew each other better as the result of their training in the arts and needs of the Pioneer. The peculiarities of the original colonies which, in the older offshoots of the Northwest Territory had not yet been thrown into the melting-pot, had been fused into new forms. They did not bring with them the training or the traditions of one place but of many scattered along the way from the Atlantic coast. To begin with, all of them were distinctly American in the strictest possible sense. The foreigner had not yet become either a rival, a teacher, or a peril — something to be endured or feared. The

## The Native Groups

Pioneer was, therefore, free to enter upon his concluding experiment with few artificial issues to distract him.

I propose now to show whence the whole were drawn in the hope that this may enlarge the power to estimate the comparative contributions of the different elements that have united to make up our population which in its beginnings was far less varied than modern writers are prone to think. A great success in government, industry, character-building, the maintenance of large human traditions, is only made by the people of whom it is composed, not by the power of government; indeed, so far as the past is concerned these have been generated almost as often when government was weak as when it was strong.

How overwhelmingly the human elements in our Pioneer development were American can only be made clear by analysis of the composition of the people who entered into its make-up. In truth, nowhere outside the English-speaking peoples — and among them in the distinctly English, Welsh, Scotch, and Scotch-Irish branches — has there been any such colonizing instinct as that applied to the continent of North America. The French achieved greater success than they have been credited with. Their failure came more from the fortune of war than from inherent weakness or serious fault of their own. So it was left for the descendants of the original English to overflow the continent and to fix, perhaps for an incalculable period, the language, the religion, the customs, the politics, and the ideas among which Americans, whatever their remoter or later origin, must live to the end.

## Pioneer Foundations

Naturally, no attempt to discover sources of population can be made so exact as to justify the large measure of dogmatism too frequently indulged : migration had been going on so long that mixed origins were found everywhere; but, as they tend to cancel each other, the statistical results fairly justify the substantial correctness of general conclusions.

### *THE AMERICAN PRODUCT DISTINCTLY WESTERN*

As to the native population, whencesoever it may have been drawn, the tables show its distribution and that each contributed in its due proportion to the whole number. If any difference could be noted it was that the balance in quality would perhaps favor the New Englander whose contribution was small so far as numbers went, the reasons for which were clear. He had already sent, either directly or indirectly, abnormal proportions of his natives and their immediate descendants to New York, to Michigan, and to Wisconsin; but the remainder of the Pioneer area, was filled with agricultural communities, both in reality and prospect, and New England was not a good school in which to make farmers. In spite of this drawback, its natives were early found, far beyond their proportionate number, in education, in the professions, and in the church, as the rude sects were either pushed into the background or improved in culture and character. It was a long time, however, before they made any distinct impression upon the life of the State : they simply did not have sufficient numbers to make this possible. Finally, when the Civil War



## The American Product Distinctly Western

came they were fused in the mass and lost their individuality earlier than the Southerner, the Pennsylvanian, and the new Westerner mainly because they did not have enough representatives to maintain it.

The institutions, the ideas, the outlook, and the people, were Western in the largest sense, having come out of the crucible that had long been heated ready to turn out a product different from anything hitherto seen. This was no handicap for the real American, drawn from whatsoever source. It was here that the new foreign language immigrant failed: he could not adjust himself to a society so unconventional and so distinctive as that into which he was cast, and he never has done so no matter however many generations have intervened or into what environment he has been thrown.

Naturally, such a generalization does not apply to the unusual individual who, after all, goes only a short way in the making of the whole; but, the truth is that the reconstruction of our ideals is positive proof that these elements, disturbing in the beginning, have never taken on the color of the life into which they cast themselves but have endeavored more and more and with conspicuous success to change the mass without loss or surrender of their own characteristics. This old life, however, was distinctly American, not alone in the origin of its population but in everything that the name then stood for; and of all the offshoots from the original stock none came more fully into the classification, in all that it could mean, than in Iowa this latest of the true Pioneer States.

## Pioneer Foundations

These men, whatever their origin, were illy adjusted as a whole to their physical surroundings. Within a short period not exceeding a hundred years, they had passed through from three to five different and confusing physical environments. Many in their immediate families or as individuals had lived for some time in each of these surroundings within two generations and often within their own experience. It was not wholly unusual — as was the case with an early settler in the central part of the State — to be born in New England, to move in succession to New York, to a southern State, to Indiana, and thence on into Iowa, a process repeated during the gold excitement by removal into California long before he had become an old man.

### *ENGLISH-SPEAKING FOREIGNERS*

It is clear that if these new foreign contingents had any real capacity for meeting the hard conditions of a Pioneer life, they did not show this gift by participation in the making of these new communities. In settlement, as in other matters, the beginnings are everything, and these were made and long maintained by Americans and by English-speaking people from Great Britain and the Canadian provinces. Even the latter brought only the qualities long developed by our native population on its westward journey. In 1860 even after the remarkable growth in the preceding ten years during which famine, poverty, discontent, and revolution had united to drive to this country persons speaking other languages they amounted to only eight per cent of

## English-Speaking Foreigners

the population of Iowa, practically none of whom had part or lot in the Pioneer work. It is pertinent to inquire just who these outlanders were, to see how they were distributed, and determine what share they had in the making of a State.

1. The English-speaking, or purely British contingent, amounting in the beginning to nearly one-half of all foreigners, was drawn, as to one-half, directly from England, the next largest contribution coming from British America, the rest in unequal proportions from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. All of these were part of a movement which was never intermitted. It was little dependent, especially as to the mother country, upon government, religion, or shifting economic conditions. It was the going out uninterruptedly of an adventurous population, almost wholly Protestant, who swarmed from a country with a human density which though small seemed to them as well as to the world both remarkable and threatening into another even more thinly populated which their kith and kin had settled and made. It was less of a movement so far as strangeness was concerned, than if its participants had gone from North to South or in opposite directions in their native country, or even from one county to another. There was no claim upon them for military service in the land of their birth and no race or religious prejudices to be overcome in that of destination.

They landed in a new jurisdiction among people of like origin, customs, manners, laws, religion, and those peculiar or inherited qualities that enable peoples to unite. They did

## Pioneer Foundations

not remain English, Canadian, Scotch, Ulstermen, or Welsh, but aligned themselves with their neighbors without more delay than was necessary to meet legal requirements. They were farmers and as such they passed from one agricultural district to another, whatever difference there might be in the products. For the most part they purchased their own lands and affiliated with the religious denominations familiar to them. That the majority of the English and Scotch were peasants of a superior order was shown by their purchase of land, while the Welsh, here as elsewhere, were drawn to the nascent mining industry.

2. The Canadians were of two types or classes in both aim and origin, although they did not separate themselves in their new homes, except in religion. Perhaps the larger contingent were of Scotch-Irish origin. These had been coming to one or another part of America since the time of Cromwell but notably from the days of 1798. Passage through Canada had seldom impaired or modified their Presbyterianism, although in case of need they sometimes adapted themselves to Methodism. The other and smaller proportion were descendants of the English Loyalists, who forced out of their native country after the War of Independence have since slowly drifted back to the advantage of all concerned. These two elements, different as they were, fraternized; but neither of them had any attachment to the place of birth. As they were themselves born Pioneers adjustment to their surroundings was easy and natural. All these English-speaking contingents furnished their share of leaders in industry and politics and could

## The Irish and Scotch-Irish

never be counted as foreigners, from whom, indeed, they kept themselves quite as much aloof as did the native Americans. They did not form a separate faction in politics, so that no hyphen was necessary to describe them. Once settled, they were not inclined to be migratory and for three generations their descendants have been a pretty stable quantity in the life both of the State of Iowa and the whole Pioneer area. As they sank so quickly into their environment their contribution to the settlement and conquest of the West is often overlooked, and probably few of their grandchildren know that they are not truly American in origin.

### *THE IRISH AND THE SCOTCH-IRISH*

THE Irish who in 1860 outnumbered those of British origin were divided into the two parts which have distinguished them since the days of Elizabeth — even since the time of the Pale. There were the Scotch-Irish, the magnitude of whose contribution to the settlement of this country has been only imperfectly recognized. Even long before the War of Independence they were a constant quantity in immigration. When the West was in the making they mingled with its Pioneers, joining the descendants of their predecessors from the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. They were then what they were in the place of birth and what they remained : Protestant, vigorous, bigoted, intolerant, but full of the character, the energy, the enterprise, and even the charm that accompany them wherever they have gone.

## Pioneer Foundations

They were farmers, but out of them, in Iowa as elsewhere in the Pioneer area, came in numbers far beyond their due share, lawyers, judges, clergymen, educators, leaders in every good work, as well as the best order of artisans and farmers. They were especially fertile in producing soldiers of courage and credit. At the time under consideration, 1860, probably about a fourth or a third of those credited in census reports as Irish by birth were either Scotch-Irish or Irish of the Pale. While it would be impossible even to estimate the proportion of the population then scattered through the Pioneer region in whose veins ran this blood of the Scot or the Ulsterman, it probably included from one source or another not less than one-fourth of the entire population within these limits. To call these people Irish either then or now is a misnomer, and it is no wonder that natives of both North and South resent the classification.

All these English-speaking elements of population were as thoroughly assimilated as is possible in a new country. They were universally distributed with representatives of both probably in every county before it reached a thousand population. They had in them nothing more of the foreign than would have existed in the best-welded people in an old country however perfectly it might be centralized.

### THE CELTIC OR CATHOLIC IRISH

It remains to deal with the other wing or class of Irish : those known as Celts or Catholics : generally treated both then and now as convertible terms. These had in them

## The Celtic or Catholic Irish

none of the characteristics of the Pioneer. They were gregarious, seldom farmers, did not emigrate because drawn by the desire to settle a new country and till the land for which they had little gift. They were not looking for the religious liberty long before accorded; and they had little part in the independent, individual industries open to a new community. Increasing at home with entire disregard of sound economic conditions and against all wholesome social ideas, they were content with their home surroundings until these finally became unendurable. Finally, when uprooted from their native soil by hunger, they found themselves part of a redundant population forced to swarm. In their grievances, whether real or fancied, much sympathy had come to them from this country whose unprecedented growth from 1840 to 1850 attracted their attention when they were forced to move. They felt towards England an enmity which had so long been a heritage that it was both settled and inherent. A like feeling based upon entirely different causes existed here, so that the Irishman, in the simplicity of his nature, thought he would be welcomed because he was loved and admired rather than simply for his hard work.

When he came he found that he could sell his labor at a good price; but within a few years he was compelled to pass through the most difficult crisis that has come to any American contingent of people in its search — in this case a forced search — for new homes. The so-called Know Nothing movement — the most pestilent known to our history — soon showed this industrious and confiding people

## Pioneer Foundations

that its only way to conquest was through its ability to do the very hardest work that could lie before anybody in the task of conquering a continent. For the first time in their existence the people of these Northern States found a class who could and would relieve them of some part of the drudgery that had oppressed them since the days of the Pilgrims.

These Irish thus became hewers of wood and drawers of water. Fortunately for them, the forest had been fairly overcome so that they were not compelled to work upon the land from which they had long wanted to escape. They had tried it since the days of Henry II and the experiment had ended in starvation and the direst of poverty; but, with even greater good fortune for themselves, the era of canal and railroad building had arrived in America, and for thirty years these sturdy people were practically the main reliance in this mighty work so far as it was dependent upon muscle and willingness to use it. They thus found themselves. Out of them came men, strong, self-reliant, honest, and capable — the first of a class who could be relied upon to construct buildings, public or private, bridges, roads, railroads — everything requiring intelligent system in management above and effective manual labor below. They were ideal contractors probably ninety per cent of whom discovered their gifts by personal use of the spade and the pick.

Perhaps I have somewhat anticipated effects from causes, for the Irishman did more than construct the public improvements waiting to be done. He did not come in time



## The Celtic or Catholic Irish

to clear the forests, and it is probable that he could not have taken kindly to the isolation and the individual initiative then necessary; but keeping away from the land as he did and showing a certain genius in his ability to wait as a laborer until his time should come, he spread out over the growing West — still a laborer, still patient — and with both gifts he drained the swamps and sloughs on the river bottoms, and when ready for improvements he dug its post holes, the cellars for its houses, and laid simple foundations. Wherever digging was to be done — wherever the spade, the mattock, the hod, or the trowel could be used — there he was, full of wit and humor, often ignorant but seldom dishonest, quarrelsome with his own but peaceful with others, eager for his day's work with its day's wage.

The Irishman preferred the town to the country — he had had enough of rural life and so recoiled from it — and in many cases he appeared to like best the poorest quarter he could find, thus creating, enlarging, and perpetuating slums in villages and cities. Now and then an individual would take to the land but it was as one in a new or an existing colony or in a neighborhood where he could associate with his own, follow his own habits and customs, and live near church and priest. Humble and unpretending as he was, this service of his to his adopted country enabled him and his people to get on their feet and to do a work the importance and value of which is not realized even yet. He extended his labors to Iowa, as to other Pioneer communities, because there as elsewhere his kind

## Pioneer Foundations

of work was waiting to be done. He came late; but when he did come he did what nobody else was prepared to do; and, best of all, he gave thousands of men with different gifts — perhaps they might have been higher ones, although this is a question in casuistry — an opportunity to develop themselves and their powers on more original lines than would otherwise have been possible. In the initiative of settlement the Celtic Irishman was never a Pioneer, behind whom he stood with a rough order of work from which men seem to recoil when they become prosperous enough to shift it. That the time arrived when the Irishman also followed in the path of his predecessors does not come within the purview of these observations or conclusions. Another thing that the Irishman did here and all over the world was something that to him was anathema : he helped to extend the dominion of the English language which probably has in the world from ten to twenty million more users than would have been the case if he had not been driven out of Ireland by starvation.

### *THE COMING OF THE GERMAN*

THE third variety of foreigner which comes within the period under review is the German. He was as far from a Pioneer as any one could be. He belonged to a people who with all their gifts had advantaged nothing in the outer world since it descended upon Rome or in one small branch, and that not closely related to Germany proper, had sent some of its early marauders to England. As has been the case elsewhere, the German only discovered the

## The Coming of the German

Pioneer region when everybody else had gone ahead and taken his choice : then he came gleaning after. So far as history knows he had not even begun this process before 1830. During the next twenty years, when others were coming in droves, only a few thousand Germans found Iowa, and these mainly as an overflow from Wisconsin, of which it had formed a part, or from Missouri. Out of them curious as it may seem in the light of recent history less than a hundred had been drawn from Prussia.

By 1860 the Germans had increased to nearly forty thousand in Iowa. Although a great vacant area still lay awaiting settlement and conquest, the German never so much as thought of approaching it. Instead, he hugged the Mississippi River so closely that probably nine out of ten were in six of the counties bordering upon it, and the remainder had gone back only a few miles under the wing of the larger communities. He settled in peace, as he fights in war — in massed formation. He did not seriously affect the budding industries of the State. He probably originated none except brewing which he adapted to modern scientific conditions. Then, as always, he did the same work better than others were accustomed to perform it. Generally speaking, the German was a transplanted peasant with all the qualities that the word connotes. If he worked, and he always did, he also saved. Whatever employment he followed, if he started poor his poverty did not last long. His standards were so different that he would be comfortable, almost rich, with a fraction of the accumulations of his American, English, or Irish neighbor, or any other,

## Pioneer Foundations

except the Scotchman when he, too, was distinctly a peasant.

The early Germans of Iowa may also be divided into two kinds : often along religious lines. Perhaps a fourth or a third were Catholics. The remainder would subdivide themselves into various orders of mystics. But, for the most part, they were Protestant peasants, excellent citizens, law-abiding, attached to their own customs, domestic to a degree, careful to train their children in the practical, with little of the quality known as public spirit, taking what they could get with industry and honesty without helping anybody to promote so-called progressive policies. In the mass they had little influence upon politics not from an unwillingness to seek or take office but because they were scattered in communities where they could not hope to command public recognition. They followed closely and with much fidelity their leaders, who were often men of excellent ability — though generally more or less handicapped by a provincialism both imported and acquired. They always boasted of their assimilation to American ideas and institutions; but their English-speaking neighbors knew better, because to use a South African term, the German long remained, to all intents and purposes, an Outlander.

In the first generation they were seriously affected by their inability to speak English. The leaders learned the language — as the educated among them always do — but it long remained too severe a task for the older peasant tongues, limited, as ever, to the expression of simple ideas.

## The Scandinavians

In the life of the Pioneer, speaking English not at all or badly or brokenly was a serious drawback. Sad to say, the person with even the best of manners was inclined to ridicule an imperfect command of the language. Another feature that made life difficult for a German outside his own neighborhood was that the Pioneer knew nothing about the man who spoke German except that it had been the language of the Hessians who remained historic bugaboos as they had been in earlier days in the flesh. In spite of his enforced military training, the German, when tried in a time of crisis, was of little use as the commander of any contingent, however small. His peasant origin was against him, while those of superior birth or education who saw opportunity ahead of them and were solicitous to overtake it had something to do besides fighting. That he made little impression upon the State of his choice is well illustrated by the fact that in its history no man German by birth, origin, or name has been presented by any political party as a candidate for Governor, United States Senator, or any other office of commanding importance. This has not come from opposition or prejudice, or because of antecedents; but from the difficulty encountered everywhere under our institutions by the men who belong to all appearance unchangeably to the peasant type.

### THE SCANDINAVIANS

PRACTICALLY unknown in 1840 as a serious element in American population, by 1850 the faint beginnings are seen of a Scandinavian immigration which has been in many

## Pioneer Foundations

respects as remarkable as any the country has known. It did not start seriously until after settlement had reached well into the prairie and, at its first appearance, only about five per cent of it had found refuge inside the Pioneer area. By 1860 it had grown modestly in numbers, but its distribution was still confined in about like proportions to the same area, and its new and remoter offshoots further west. While the Scandinavians never came with an inrush, like the Irish after 1846, or the Germans after 1848 or 1870, their increase was rapid, considering the narrow population resources from which they were drawn, until at the end of our period there were 31,179 in Iowa and 241,685 in the whole country, drawn from these combined nationalities of whom more than half were Danes.

Differing from each other, ethnically and historically, as did the people of these three nationalities, they were so confused in the popular mind that they were viewed as a single source of population supply and as having the same race characteristics. This was, perhaps, natural because they pressed forward with almost equal zeal into the regions having the coldest winters; almost to a man, woman, or child, they were Protestant; and, unlike any other people that came from foreign countries, they remained farmers. In these respects, as well as in their industry and thrift, they became a second contingent of Pioneers. If they were not forerunners, neither were they gleaners. But they had the gift of penetration and the passion for solitude that carried them into the most distant places. They differed, however, from the earliest Pioneers in that they generally

## The Scandinavians

settled in small groups or colonies though seldom far removed from English-speaking neighbors and seldom persisted long in the preservation of native usages. They were not clannish or assertive of their national dress or characteristics; did not tend among themselves to mix by marriage, or over-much by association, with incomers from other countries of the Scandinavian peninsula; became American citizens as soon as possible; did not push themselves prematurely or without preparation into local or national politics so far as office or party management was concerned; were little given to the use of the hyphen; and they did not insist that their language should be generally taught in the public schools.

On the whole, no population drawn from foreign language countries fitted more promptly into our national life (whether in the simpler days under treatment, or those later and more pretentious) than the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes who scattered themselves, pretty generally, even if thinly, over the West from 1850 to 1870, and whose descendants, still looking for their beloved frigidity, removed between 1901 and 1914 in such large numbers to the Northwest provinces of Canada. Their contribution to the Pioneer area, though late, is more characteristic than that made by any other single continental people, mainly because it was never exclusive or assertive, adapted itself as by nature to our ideas and institutions, and while revering its origins never failed to do its full part in the industry, education, religious, and political activities of the land of adoption.

## Pioneer Foundations

(If the writer might venture to suggest something worthy to be done by the intelligent and scholarly students among the descendants of these people, it would be that carefully prepared histories of the contributions made by them to the development of this country should be written. Every other group, especially the largest among them (the Germans and Irish) have even somewhat magnified their office. Their numbers are, of course, much larger and their history here much longer. But when the work done by the united Scandinavian peoples is considered, and the fact is remembered that they are third in numerical importance among our earlier immigrations; that they have never been of a mushroom growth; have not been forced to come out of poverty, starvation, or oppression, but have settled down at once to a fitted participation in our American life, the duty to keep themselves, their descendants, their new and old countrymen, and the world fully informed about origins is incumbent upon them. Whether the Vikings ever came to America or not, it is well to remember that the early Swedes who sailed up Delaware Bay towards the end of the seventeenth century founded and settled Philadelphia and parts of Delaware and left behind them, before they were overwhelmed by the advent of William Penn and his Quakers, some of the most interesting architectural and social landmarks planted by them.

### OTHER FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

THE census of 1850 taken midway of the period under study showed about 2500 Dutch; but as their quaint cus-



## Other Foreign Contributions

toms, long maintained, were mostly displayed in a colony in Marion County, they had little part in the formative work of the Pioneer. They did not draw recruits in any considerable numbers, and as the original people speedily merged themselves into the life about them they do not demand separate discussion. There were a like number of each of French and Swiss but they were so scattered over the mass that neither their characteristics nor their work made any serious impression. In both cases they were probably an overplus thrown off from Ohio and Indiana, and, to a smaller extent from Illinois. (For statistics of these immigrants from various countries see the table on page 150.)

I have thus sought to analyze, in brief, the composition of the people who from that time forward were to give form and substance to this last stopping-place of the Pioneer and to make it a force in our life. In doing this I have sought to make clear their distinctive traits, and at the same time to show how at irregular intervals some small rills have found their way into the main stream of our life. It was necessary thus to lay a sufficient foundation for a study in which men and their doings in new strange scenes are the only matters of importance.

In order to show in the smallest space possible the contributions of all foreign countries to the population of the Pioneer region, I append the following table showing birth by countries and residence by States in 1850 according to the census of that year :

# Pioneer Foundations

## FOREIGN BORN WHITES IN PIONEER REGION IN 1850—BY STATES

Living in	Born In :						
	England Scotland and Wales	Ireland	Germany Austria and Switzer- land	Scandi- navia	France	British America	Other Coun- tries
Total Foreign							
Kentucky	3659	9466	14096	45	1116	275	532
Tennessee	1050	2640	1480	16	245	76	233
Ohio	36741	51562	115342	126	7375	5880	1486
Indiana	7060	12787	30065	44	2279	1878	313
Illinois	23861	27786	40146	3631	3396	10699	1074
Missouri	6604	14734	46104	247	2138	1653	994
Michigan	13108	13430	10399	139	945	14008	2823
Iowa	4849	4885	7428	611	385	1756	321
Wisconsin	26798	21043	39229	8885	775	8277	1688
Totals	123730	158333	304289	13744	18654	44502	9464
							672716

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS



*THE EARLY WEST JEFFERSONIAN*

It is necessary to begin this chapter with a close resemblance to an apology. Defined generally as the science of government, politics has acquired a meaning so much narrower that it cannot fairly indicate the multiplied processes devised by men for the conduct of their associative affairs. Outside the latter, and almost independent of them, lie an almost infinite series of theories, policies, and actions with a meaning scarcely thought of even as late as the end of the period under study when politics really was government rather than what it seems now when in the popular conception government has become the thing known as party management. Only by employing both words can the study be made to include the real meaning, without danger of ambiguity or misinterpretation.

To an extent not always fully recognized, the whole of the West — no less than the new South — was formed and in its early days governed in its most minute ramifications under the doctrines of Thomas Jefferson. In the making and conduct of new commonwealths and communities, whencesoever their people were drawn, his ideas were the dominant forces. Practically no others were known. Even the theory of protection could trace many of its arguments to his writings and some of its precedents and triumphs to his acts. Local organization was drawn mostly from

## Pioneer Foundations

Virginia models. The use of the county rather than the town or the State as the central power in levying taxes provided for poor relief and education and in insisting upon rotation in office — a fetich never wholly dislodged from its altar — the methods of preserving the peace, the judicial machinery — most of the agencies of government — sprang from the application of the doctrine of few and restricted powers in government.

The supremacy of the individual was strengthened by the character of the settlement in which, other than protection against the Indian it was men as men and not as masses that counted in the making of new communities. These grew almost unconsciously into States, each quite as zealous in maintaining its powers unimpaired as were the thirteen colonies in the making of the original Confederation, or the same corporations when they became States in yielding to the manifest necessity for a Federal Constitution.

The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions really reflected the prevailing, even the determined, sentiment of the time. That they were full of ill omen, tended to anarchy, and magnified weaknesses which though recognized and predicted at the time left them free to work out their humors in violence could not then be predicted; and even if it had been possible to foresee the power for mischief, their logic was inevitable. The people of the time would have it so : all ideas, policies, and actions were based upon individualism, and, if this was true of men why, they argued, should States be exempt from the operation of the same principles?

## Limitations Upon Power

The fear of central authority was universal. These ideas ran riot in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, and to an extent in Illinois. By the time that Iowa's turn came many doubts had arisen about the wisdom of extreme policies. The great Province of Louisiana from which it was to be carved as its first free State was acquired through the exercise of that autocratic power which was used, although the right to employ it was questioned even by Jefferson. Necessity, not theory, was to confirm the wisdom of his act.

### LIMITATIONS UPON POWER

By this time also experiments all along the line had been tried: the kind of government that the Pioneer wanted and needed was fairly known. Throughout all history the choice of governors, viceroys, or aediles had been the one function in which executive officers had most tempted failure. Emperors, Kings, or Presidents seem able, especially under free, responsible government, to obtain acceptable ambassadors or personal representatives of national standing and authority. Going forth accredited to other rulers, dignity, responsibility, and distance have created a curb or restraint which tended to eliminate serious abuses. But in all ages where men have been sent to distant countries or provinces to exercise great powers on their own account the difficulty of achieving success has been very great. They have either tended to develop the abuses and corruption incident to lack of restraint or have become timid, fearful lest they overstep the narrow authority lodged in them.

## Pioneer Foundations

The latter has been quite uniformly the case in the United States, with the inevitable result that these officials have seldom been the best men in our politics. Most of our Territorial governors have shown themselves devoid of original qualities and the absence of power has made it impossible to develop or create executive capacity in any large measure.

The discovery had been made that strong Territorial governors and other officials were no longer necessary. As no large powers could be conferred upon them, there was no occasion to waste such men in places where they could become nothing more important than figure-heads. Therefore, from the Federal government, Iowa received no officials, either executive or judicial, with originality — none who could or would do anything. The State was thus started on its way as a Territory unhampered by any overweening ambitions and with a degree of mediocrity in its officials that was long to leave an impress upon its government.

The early Territorial councils — not only in Iowa but in all the States of the Pioneer area, except Michigan and Wisconsin — were filled with men, a majority of whom had been born in the South, the remainder being drawn for the most part from descendants of Southerners. They were respectable in ability and attainments though few of them came into anything like prominence, and only one, James W. Grimes, commanded in the later history of the State that large recognition so common throughout the West. The State Constitution was made and finally adopt-



## The Spirit of Self-Sufficiency

ed after one or two failures. In Iowa the people showed no strong desire to assume the larger responsibilities incident to a State. An inclination was manifest to keep it small — the question of increased taxes, always an important one in a new community, playing a large part in this hesitancy. But it was this admission to the Union that so attracted attention as to promote a rapidity of growth in population and resources that was almost unknown anywhere up to that time.

### *THE SPIRIT OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY*

OWING to our policy of never permitting either States or individuals to acquire land from the Indians, government as a rule has preceded settlement. The process was simple : a land office, a system of surveys, and a few incipient counties which by division and subdivision came to cover in due time all the area of the aspiring State. If now and then an individual or even a small group pushed into the wilderness or onto the prairie, they were removed either by force, if settled upon land not yet acquired, or they were compelled to wait until the rodman came and settled the rights of the squatter to live on a given tract. These processes were easy because the people were as much inured to government as to hard work, or heat, cold, and hardship. Wherever they came from, whoever they were, they had lived under the same institutions, had the same laws, regulations, religion, social manners and customs, and were in reality assimilated to each other. There was no occasion to throw them into the melting pot — now become so com-

## Pioneer Foundations

mon as a metaphor — they had come out of it long before they began their westward march.

Even with this settled agency they practically lost relation with the Federal government except through the post office. The courts were local, there were no direct Federal taxes, hence no assessor or collector, or spies, nothing other than the decennial census, containing the smallest suggestion of the inquisitorial. They had no large national questions to distract attention from their own concerns; taxes were levied by and upon themselves; the administration of justice, although imported, was soon naturalized; the slavery question never became a serious issue; there were no internal improvement schemes; no national roads; no central banking system; no social problems dependent upon the existence of some distant slum of which they had no personal knowledge and in which they could have no interest; neither serious quarrels over State boundaries nor inter-State jealousies existed; and no agitators barked into their ears notions which in due course would breed demagogues and self-seekers distinguished only by ignorance and devotion to all the dangerous heresies exploited by man.

The Eastern States were almost as far removed from their scheme of life as Europe or Asia. They knew Cass and Jackson and Douglas and Henry Clay. As personalities, Webster and Calhoun were almost entire strangers. They knew Horace Greeley, and he and they so reacted upon each other that his paper became the most influential national agency known to our history for making or reflecting public opinion.

## The Spirit of Self-Sufficiency

They were not indifferent to their institutions, but since these were as fixed as the firmament they did not have to think about them. They recognized the large powers of government in clearing the way to settlement, its watchfulness in affording protection to great frontiers under which settlers were able at once to look out for themselves, and to enlarge boundaries without seeming to extend individual power. In short, while they were self-reliant, accustomed to do things for themselves, they had, as they showed when occasion required, a lofty patriotism based upon the doctrine that it was "not theirs to reason why". Yet, with these limitations, which to their successors less than two generations after would seem so strange as almost to be fatalism gone mad, there was a strong interest in the ideas and events of a foreign nature so far as these dealt with, or were even remotely related to politics in the large conception of the word.

The devotion to republicanism was a faith — almost an idolatry — and our institutions were deemed the perfection of wisdom. This accounts for the universal belief in the ultimate acceptance of republican government in the remotest bounds of earth. That if so tried it might prove an *ignis fatuus* could not then be imagined by a confiding people. So, not only in this new offspring in the West but everywhere there was a fervent sympathy with every movement in Greece, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Germany, France, Canada, or Italy, with extravagant hopes for every other people where regal authority cast its shadow. It now matters not that within the intervening period since this

## Pioneer Foundations

ferment manifested itself we have continually approached Europe more rapidly in all the realities of government than the movement has proceeded in the opposite direction. It was the one ideal of a great country, and even in its failure it is still competent for us to realize the enormous possibilities of a people who could thus give themselves over to belief in an abstract idea — to the worship of ideals unknown to generations earlier.\*

While this remained, there was little reason for inquiry about our official relations to other countries, still less for caring anything about the “effete monarchies of Europe” to quote the cant phrase of the time. London, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Vienna were much further away so far as interest went than they were as points on a world chart. We had little trade with them and what we had — except when we sold something now and then — was rather resented; so that outside sentimental sympathy with their misfortune in having kings — supposed to be always and everywhere the unquestioned arbiters of life and property

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\*He [Emerson] was born nearly with the century, and his soul received its bent from the innocent American of before 1830. He breathed in the confident, sweet, morning spirit of a time when America believed that the 4th of July, the Declaration of Independence, the common school, and the four years Presidential term, were finalities in political science and social happiness; of a time when society was simple, and comparatively innocent; when our institutions and our progress were the wonder of de Tocqueville and the Old World, and the delight of ourselves; when there were Peace Societies, and it seemed to the youth uninstructed by the past as if the Millennium were really not so very far off. — Charles Eliot Norton's *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 504, 505.

## The Importance of the County

—the great mass of Americans who lived between 1830 and 1865 would have preferred that their country should be fenced in with a wall, more than Chinese in its exclusive power, than to be dependent upon the outside for anything. This sentiment was probably a natural result of the embargo which, laid during the second war with England, was the nursing mother of that policy of extreme protection in which, despite occasional protests, belief was universal. Never in history, perhaps, has any assertion of the power of government been accepted, by a great people with such substantial unanimity as that which, during this period, looked to making America independent of the world.

### *THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNTY*

WHEN a State finally came into being it was not some new entity or special creation. It was full-grown : as assertive as if it had always been in the Union. It took over from the Territory its machinery; its officers had their duties prescribed not only by law but fixed by precedent and universal use; its counties having no natural boundaries were only changed in form, partition and consolidation going on as before, with officials chosen in their own way but with no new duties; its courts were in nowise different except, perhaps, in name; it had an elected, instead of appointed Governor, and chose a bicameral legislature instead of a Council; and its life and its power to deal with its citizens were no more complicated the day after it became a State than they had been the day before.

In either case, the public arrangements were of a primi-

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tive order. Its relations to the population could not have been more simple, whatever its form of government. It interfered as little as possible with the liberty of the individual so long as he neither troubled his neighbor nor committed crime. It did not regulate his habits of eating or drinking, the treatment of his children, the hours he or his helpers should work, nor outside the common law prescribe forms for the regulation of voting. Voluntary societies to prevent or to regulate this, that, or the other act had no existence. It had little to do except to enact custom into law by conferring upon counties certain powers prescribing given duties and defining what they in their turn should require of townships, school and road districts, and how each should choose officials to carry out these regulations. Aside from the State which, in order to defray its costs, levied and collected taxes through county machinery, it directed that certain assessments, like those for schools and roads, should be mandatory upon the counties which in their turn carried their own authority and that of the State into the minor bodies.

The county constructed bridges on State and county roads, getting aid from general levies, provided places for holding the courts and transacting its own business, supported its own paupers either in poorhouses or by outdoor relief, and occasionally, as in education, allocated certain provided funds on a *per capita* basis. It had to coöperate with the State in arranging for elections and in collecting the taxes levied by both. For doing these things it had its own miniature legislature which acted in its own behalf

## The Importance of the County

and on that of other bodies under it in the townships or in school and road districts. The county officers, other than the sheriff who was amenable to the courts, were the servants of this board of supervisors, whatever, in the shifting changes, its name might be, all working within the limits of carefully devised general regulations. The power of removing subordinates or minor officials was restricted, but there was supposed to be a pretty clear responsibility to electors.

The counties were water-tight political compartments in which power was clearly centralized. It was here that men took each other's measure, developed ambitions, and thus administered the popular government that found an existence though these leading men seldom became office-holders either in counties or elsewhere. Here, as under other systems, neither these nor any other public offices, dependent upon stipends, were filled by the best men who had higher duties to society and themselves than to give their time to the public, even if the places had been bestowed without effort; especially they could not do this in view of the methods to which even then resort must be had.

They belonged to human types always difficult to bring home to a student unfamiliar with any given period, even if his own. In general, they may be defined as the accountant type, those to whom, in other periods, would fall the bookkeeping function. They enjoyed, perhaps, rather more than average educational advantages which then meant a fair training in figures and penmanship. Without the enterprise, lacking something even in the industry necessary to

## Pioneer Foundations

develop successfully as farmers, they had in most cases a certain gift for acquiring popularity. For such places it was then seldom necessary to have a gift for public speech; but the qualities inherent in good fellowship were needed. These seldom inure in the really strong men of a Pioneer community, or in any other where real work is to be done, and the latter had in them within the limits of their opportunity real creative power. As a result, until after the Civil War, positions clerical in character were bestowed upon early settlers of the second order and the tenure in spite of theory was fairly stable. It was before party development had provided a series of competitors — never less than three in number — ready for every place when, indeed, few men of the type described were available.

### *A FAIR MEASURE OF EFFICIENCY*

ON the whole in the early history of the Pioneer States there was a fair average of efficiency and honesty among these officials. They grew into their small places, whose duties they had a chance to learn, soon became familiar with the township assessors, clerks, constables, road supervisors, and school directors within their own and contiguous jurisdictions. As a county grew in population this familiarity was highly advantageous. It could be used to direct newcomers to the most eligible townships, and even to the surveyed sections still open for settlement, thus strengthening their own position and influence in the community. In these early days it was seldom that they proved dishonest, so that on the whole from every point of view the places



## A Fair Measure of Efficiency

considering the work required of them were probably as well filled as the larger positions of like character in these times.

As these men had been drawn from farms their election to office for terms long or short meant removal to the county seat from which they seldom returned. In most counties all over the Pioneer region, the central town was recruited from these men and others of a like order who, discouraged by isolation and hard work for either of which they were unfitted, sought relief from them in this way. There was no large development of confidence in the local official of this type. As he had no first-rate work, his place in the social economy was not of the highest; but he had the wanted opportunity and, having taken his place, he kept it until forced out of it.

In members of the legislature, as in county commissions and boards where the duties could be made incident to the conduct of a farm, a somewhat superior order of men came to the front. In these, certain constructive abilities were required: in the one case they had to assist in the adaptation of laws to new conditions many of which involved a definition of duties and stricter oversight of public officials of the clerical order, whether State or local; in the other, they had certain powers of direction or supervision over county officers. These were places of considerable dignity and by reason of the attached responsibility demanded abilities and standing of a higher order. As a rule, these were prosperous farmers who had done good work in their own neighborhoods and belonged to the best class

## Pioneer Foundations

that such a community could command. They were not office-seekers, and, as they could ill afford the time, seldom served long terms. Taken as a whole an average county would have within its citizenship at any given time several men who had shown their capacity for usefulness in such places. In emergencies they were generally called upon for advice or assistance; if the Japanese system had been in vogue they would probably have been the Elder Statesmen of a given county.

### *DOMINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP*

BUT it was in the townships that the public work of the Pioneer was done. He lived in form under a modified county system based upon that of Virginia and the Middle and Southern colonies; but his real development came through the engrafting upon it of some features of the town system of New England, and that, too, without his knowing anything about it even by study. Both were adaptations of the parish methods of the mother-country. It has become common everywhere in these days of big things to deprecate the parish which like all things human has its limitations. It still remains true, however, that every man, whatever his ability, character, or destiny, must be born in a parish; he is educated and trained in a parish; he lives, somewhere, under the laws and is governed by the rules and conventions of a parish; he must be married in a parish, and perform or shirk the work that can only be done in a parish; his obligations are parochial, as are his house and his taxes; his associations must revolve around

## The Dominance of a Township

a parish; and when he dies he will be buried under parochial regulations. However great he may be, or however proud, he cannot escape the parish; however poor he may become, a Christian parish stands ready somewhere to receive and care for him.

The township, by the aid of taxes levied in the county and through its varied agents, made and maintained the roads, constructed fords or bridges across the small streams, built and furnished schoolhouses, found and hired teachers, carried out regulations about boundary or partition fences, tried petty offenders, and protected life and property. These formal communities maintained religious services first in schoolhouses and, as soon as possible, in their own churches; and both provided and ran the machinery of orderly life. The commercial undertakings, mills, workshops for every necessary trade, had their genesis down in these thinly-populated, mechanical, unpretentious six-mile squares.

There were no large towns, and attempts to build them were failures. Pioneer society could only be developed as a series of units, where the individual, whatever his occupation or his abilities did his part. This accounts for the starting of numberless small villages whose lots, once made valuable by hope, soon passed as the result of social and economic changes under the dominion of the plough. In the township, social relations were fostered, political initiative was potent, men came together to hear about their schools — the only direct survival of the New England town meeting — and from there boys and girls went forth in search of a broader field and larger opportunity. It was

## Pioneer Foundations

there that coöperation ruled from the time that the moving stranger made his first inquiry about land or work with the thought of settling himself and his family.

Every township, until it was finally filled with people, was an active competitor of its neighbors and thus came to have its own personality almost like that of an individual. Controlling, within limits, under the county the power to levy and collect taxes, it could hold out lures or promises in order to draw business enterprises that might be looking for sites, or to attract or hold artisans ambitious to start in the world on their own account. Many a private school, while waiting for the public system, grew temporarily into an academy with a distinct character because some enterprising leader in a township was able to find the right teacher and by modest but timely encouragement to hold him.

While the township was frankly local and tended for a time to create an unreasonable pride and thus promoted the provincialism inseparable from the settlement of a new country; as population increased and rivalry continued, this tendency began to disappear and growth proceeded on broader lines. It remained a training school for public business until in course of time the changed political conditions brought it under the control of some local schemer who, in league with like men in other townships, threw it into the hands of a county leader better known later as a boss. But this is another story : one that belongs to the period that lies on the hither side of 1870 — the year which closes the period of this book.

## The Place of the Taxing Power

### THE PLACE OF THE TAXING POWER

NOTHING was of more importance to the American settler, whether colonial, Pioneer, or frontiersman, than the fact that wherever he went he controlled local taxation : as a natural effect, he was able to keep its rate low. He did not resist expenditures necessary for public development; but he could avoid the exacting or the artificial. If he had been thrown into a society where revenues came from the top, from corporations, or State or government grants in aid, or succession duties, or incomes, or into a time when his desire for railroads or other improvements could have been gratified by levies upon himself and his neighbors, he would have created such an inheritance of debt and dependence that his character would have been entirely different. This has been a great drawback in settlements not really Pioneer in their nature still further west. It was fortunate for him that he could not run up debts either for public improvements or private capital but had so to pay his way that development proceeded slowly but surely on safe lines.

There was none of the old prejudice on the part of the citizen against the tax collector as such, for the reason that it would have operated against himself; but there was, almost universally, a serious individual difficulty in raising the few dollars necessary to pay the annual levy. Sometimes, even with the best among the settlers, months of anxious saving were involved in this provision. It was a time when money was difficult to command. Other demands could be met in one way or another; but taxes took

## Pioneer Foundations

what is known in popular jargon as cash however small the amount. In such times no man had to preach economy in public expenditures because in a county sparsely-settled the taxpayer who had mastered the three R's could calculate his proportion of the cost of a given improvement; hence every man helped every other to watch outlays. This did not produce closeness for its own sake, as there was always an ability to get money for improvements really necessary or for emergencies; and perhaps, almost never, did a difficulty arise in anything relating to primary education.

The Pioneer was a prudent man in the levy of taxes, both from necessity and because he was gifted with the patience of his race. He realized clearly enough that progress was slow and that the natural resources lying all about him could only be developed with time and by people. He was willing to do his part to promote this growth; but he was too prudent to mortgage the future with debt, premature improvements, or false hopes. In every township and taxing center there were leaders with foresight and devotion to the common interest. Not only was this a leadership of mind but it was that inevitable leadership which, after life itself, so inures in property as to make it the one potential fact among men. It needed no agitation to establish it; it involved no knowledge of the interesting though often misleading study known as political economy; it was inherent in his nature : the one protection offered to the poorest man in the community, whether he even had character or not.

## Pioneer Judicial Systems

Here was one place where the idea of equality was potent; the fruit of every man's industry was respected and protected, just as his life was no less sacred than that of another. This did not come from the assertion of a right, natural or other, nor was it a discovery of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Jefferson, or some other theorizer; it was inseparable from civilization itself. The raw doctrines of equality promulgated by these philosophers, distorted as they have become in the course of time by repressing industry and discipline, arousing false hopes, and leaving as a legacy a discontent far from divine, have done mankind an injury beyond calculation; but their essence, as already outlined, has been the incident of the most cultivated of societies, no less than of the rough, sometimes rather uncouth, Pioneer life under study. It is not American, English, Latin, Greek, Pagan, or Christian : it is humanity finding itself.

### *PIONEER JUDICIAL SYSTEMS*

As there is not much room for originality in the judicial system of a new State it is not possible to treat it with any great fullness. It is part of the general development of the law in one free country which has inherited the ideas and methods of another free country, still older and more settled. It is the extension of a system which has grown up during centuries of slow-moving change. The men called to administer it must have had the same general training, they belong to the same type, succeed to the same rules, deal with the same questions, represent the same

## Pioneer Foundations

sentiments and policies that operate in the general society to which tradition binds them. There may be some small scope for variation as between a primeval forest and a vast bare plateau in the matter of the executive and the legislative, but the judicial is a steady force. With the single exception that the earliest Pioneer had more boundary disputes and was perhaps over-inclined to litigiousness the differences between systems in varying zones are small.

A State judiciary grows slowly from the seed sprouted in a Territory, under Federal control that is more nominal than real. There is for a long time no apparent change in the order of men who become judges or in the lawyers who appear before them. Generally speaking, the early judges in the lower courts were not chosen from the most successful men at the bar any more than those of later days; they were drawn, for the most part, from the well-balanced, steady men who content with comparatively small returns were regarded as safe rather than brilliant. It is seldom that the latter either seek judgeships or are sought for them. Their tastes are different and their careers must be found in the hurly-burly of practice, and in politics where executive ability seeks scope.

The common complaint was that judges were slow, that their knowledge of the law was not sufficient to insure quick decisions, that they kept their ears too close to the ground in corporation cases when the latter began to have importance. Considering how conservative the law is, how slowly it changes, these faults were probably due to the monotony of the issues presented. It was seldom that a



## Pioneer Judicial Systems

lawyer with radical views on current questions became a judge. As strong as public sentiment was against the liquor traffic it was rare that a rabid prohibitionist would be nominated or elected. For a time there was the usual Pioneer tendency to make judgeships strictly partisan : but this soon began to disappear mainly as the result of the merit agitation but also owing to an inherent sense of fairness and a growing independence.

The Supreme Court of Iowa, following the example of other Pioneer States, attracted a class of men of fair attainments but almost none that has stood out in the larger history of the judiciary. From the character of the issues this could hardly be expected in a remote interior State especially as the United States courts were just emerging into new and undue activity. It was common in the early days to choose the appeal judges from the bar rather than from those who had had experience in the district or circuit courts. This was probably due to the fact that the type of men already described had not the breadth of view thought necessary in appeals. At one time, just before 1870, its merit was high in the reports and with bar and people — perhaps as high as in any State of the Pioneer region — but neither then, nor at any time, did it produce a line of decisions like those which had distinguished John Bannister Gibson in Pennsylvania, James Kent in New York, or Chief Justice Shaw in Massachusetts, or in a still later day Chief Justice Cooley in Michigan. The courts of record and those of appeal were free at all times from suspicion whether of corruption, partiality, or questionable

## Pioneer Foundations

personal character in their judges. The United States Judges, chosen from the State, were of a still higher order, and for one of them, Samuel F. Miller, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, it is necessary to go back to Joseph Story's time to find a superior or equal.

### *THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE*

IN the choice of most officials who were to serve the people in the early and simple life of the Pioneer, it is generally possible to detect some policy or principle. In some earlier judicial systems, especially of the old Middle States, it was common to have lay judges in association with some lawyer. This seems never to have prevailed for long in the Pioneer areas west of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, primary jurisdiction being entrusted to justices of the peace who were generally elected in each township. In no known case within the range of personal knowledge or of observers whose opinions the writer has sought was such an official chosen from the really intelligent men in the Pioneer community. The reason can only be sought in Dogberry's dictum : "You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man." Generally well advanced in dotage if not in years, often over-pious and by reason of ignorance under-religious, rarely having even the shadow of an education, seldom fairly successful in business and sometimes almost dependent they were something of a judicial order never seen anywhere else.

In general, even when the settler had not passed the litigious period he avoided bringing his case before the

## The Method of Making Nominations

neighborhood Squire — this title being the principal emolument of the office — and commonly settled his differences rather than enter an appearance in this (in name) one of the most ancient of courts. The judicial dicta afforded ample material for the humorist, when finally attracted to the spot; his decisions, when not based upon his own prejudices, reflected the opinions of the lawyer who made the last argument; and his cocksureness was monumental. His antics, his improvised court, his personality, everything about him, made his office and his individuality the laughing-stock of a community where a sense of humor was not, perhaps, over keen.

### THE METHOD OF MAKING NOMINATIONS

WITHIN the period under consideration the convention system had come into general vogue, official tenure was the same as it is now, and men were quite as willing, perhaps, to serve the public as in other average times. The range of selection being smaller and the best men quite as unwilling as now to accept salaried places, there was still a strong desire to get the services of the most efficient available. Party division was sharper than now and independent voting less common. There were always enough seekers to create rivalry, but seldom sufficient bitterness was developed to provoke or warrant that terrible thing — a bolt from a regular nomination.

No mechanical leadership had then been developed in any State, or probably in any county in all the pioneer region of the order now so well established that it seems

## Pioneer Foundations

always to have existed, that is a leadership which taking up a man or set of men can put names upon a party ticket and then carry it through against protest or opposition. The boss was not known. A governor or other official was not expected to dictate his own associates on a party ticket or to provide for the succession. In either case the choice was, generally speaking, left to the convention after the various candidates had announced their aspirations and friends had sounded their praises.

There was not much canvassing by candidates before conventions. It was then thought that a party must not show prior to the meeting of this body that it could be divided, and a prejudice long existed against a candidate for what was called "blowing his own horn". It was deemed immodest as against his fellow-partisans, though proper enough against the other party. There was scheming and planning, as in all things human, but these were not so massed that two contests must be waged by the willing candidate — one for a nomination and the other for election.

The most available man in a county or legislative district — not always the best — was more likely than not to have his ambitions gratified without question, other, especially younger, aspirants feeling that in the natural working of the principle of rotation in office their time would come. So strong was this feeling even in later years that it has only been a little while since in half the legislative districts that any member has been elected to succeed himself. Even if such a man before seeking to return waited until a term

## The Method of Making Nominations

intervened, he generally failed because a new man in some other part of the district must have a chance. In the governorship no man dared even to run for a third time until after the opening of the present century.

In most cases, with the exception of Secretary of State — which in many States has been something of an exception to the almost universal rule of two terms — other State and county officials whatever their merit have had to play the game. For a long time members of Congress were treated in the same way. Under this rule some of the most creditable public men known to the earlier history of the State were retired just as they had demonstrated their ability and usefulness. During the Civil War the State had an uncommonly influential delegation in Congress: for the quarter of a century after its close the Civil War soldier reduced it almost to a state of impotence. In the competition for the smaller offices, both State and county, large meetings, where the candidates were the principal attraction, were less common than now; there was a tendency to put into the field the best speakers regardless of their official relation, either real or prospective, to the competing parties.

In accordance with the custom of the Pioneer, there had to be at least two candidates for every office — one for each party. It mattered little that for one there was scarcely the remotest chance of success; the ticket must be complete in every part from the modest township clerk to the governorship and member of Congress. In many cases this was helpful to the bright men in the minority party. It gave them an opportunity to appear to advantage against

## Pioneer Foundations

the majority candidates who, relying upon party power or prestige, were often heavy or unattractive and thus seriously handicapped in the resulting canvass. This was particularly true if a good speaker challenged the majority representatives to a joint debate when triumph came whether the invitation was accepted or rejected.

Iowa illustrates, perhaps, as well as any other State in the West this universal party competition. During its early history it had been securely Democratic; since 1854 only three Democratic governors have been elected; and from 1852 to 1912 the Republican electors never failed to carry the State in a Presidential year. During this long period majorities seldom fell below twenty thousand; and yet at no time even during the Civil War did the Democrats fail to nominate a ticket filled from top to bottom with their own adherents. It was often a hard task; but in spite of rebuffs and foreordained defeat it was always accomplished. If they had not done this, if they had failed to hold State and county conventions, it would have been deemed that they had failed in duty and in the maintenance of their own respect and that of their opponents. They were ready for any fate. History furnishes few instances of equal persistence in the face of such serious discouragements. Even the Republicans of Kentucky did win a local success, now and then; besides, their term of banishment was much shorter. (The reader may be reminded that all this was written by the author before the decade of the nineteen thirties when party lines were very much broken. — The Editor)

## Simple and Cheap Methods

### *SIMPLE AND CHEAP METHODS*

THE money cost either to individual candidates or to their friends was practically nothing. Salaries were low, but in practically all cases they became for the time the personal and family dependence of the incumbents. There was little accumulated property outside the returns drawn from the labor expended upon it. In this absence of independent income if a farmer quit his job and took an office, he would have little from it that he did not work for. He could not have borne the burden if from his potential salary he had been compelled to pay out any sum, even the smallest, as expense for getting the place. If he canvassed the State or county after nomination, he was subjected to almost no cost. He rode his horse or drove in his buggy from point to point, and was entertained by party or personal friends. Later, like his rivals or fellows, he traveled about the State on railroad passes. He had no hall hire to pay, either as a whole or in part, because his meetings were held in the county courthouse, the neighborhood schoolhouse, or, better still, out of doors; he did not have to pay a band because there was none; if there was a State committee, it had few charges to meet except postage and little of that; and no newspapers were paid for party announcements; while the little printing was generally done at a nominal price or was contributed to the cause by some one of the editors who yearned for the fleshpots which took on the similitude of the county printing, fat delinquent tax-lists, or dreams of post offices.

The bringing of voters to the simple primaries of the

## Pioneer Foundations

time, or to the polls, was done by the leading men in each neighborhood—and they would accept neither pay nor office. They not only furnished horses and vehicles but did, on their own account, the work which in their capacity as local managers they knew to be necessary; whether facing assured success or hopeless defeat, they were as attached to their cause as they were to their candidates either as friends or partisans. They would no more have thought of accepting money from any man or committee than of cutting off a hand. Their services, and those of their sons and hired help, were given as freely as much a matter of course as they were to the gathering of the crops grown by their own initiative and labor. The use of money as a bribe would have subjected both giver and taker to expulsion astride a rail or to a coat of tar and feathers.\*

The Duke of Wellington, who, as tradition records, once expressed the hope that a given candidate for the Garter did not have any of this “d—d merit about him”, would have been pleased with Pioneer sentiment. There was not

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\* Lincoln remained a member of the Legislature by successive re-elections from 1834 to 1842. His campaigns were carried on almost entirely without expense. Joshua Speed told the writers that on one occasion some of the Whigs contributed a purse of two hundred dollars which Speed handed to Lincoln to pay his personal expenses in the canvass. After the election was over, the successful candidate handed Speed \$199.25, with the request that he return it to the subscribers. “I did not need the money”, he said. “I made the canvass on my own horse; my entertainment, being at the houses of friends, cost me nothing; and my only outlay was seventy-five cents for a barrel of cider, which some farmhands insisted I should treat them to.” — Nicolay & Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. I, p. 158.



## Simple and Cheap Methods

only no cant about the question; it was never thought of, much less talked about. To have suggested the election, appointment, or retention, of any official, wholly upon such a plea would have been impossible; yet it is probably safe to say that most places were filled in each community with men fairly qualified for the simple duties bearing in mind that then, as now and always, the really best man could not be induced to take such a place, even in the majority party. It was a tribute to the efficiency necessary that, on the whole, the second rate man did the work so well; but, whether first or second, no serious claim to merit would have been preferred.

As an outcome from these conditions — how archaic and simple they now seem — if politics was often petty, if the State was small and the men not always of the ablest, it was as nearly honest as anything relating to human power, whatever the scale, may be. The actors on these scenes believed that they represented, however small their stage, the only great experiment in human government that had been tried; and they were confident that at bottom its success did not depend upon some far-away president, governor, or legislative body, but upon each one as an individual.

They were keen partisans, facing each other with what they deemed opposing ideas, and as narrow as such men can be; but they neglected nothing which honest in itself would promote the success of the great achievement : honest government; republican in form; taxes low but ample; economy in expenditure; and the best men who,

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like unto themselves in opinion, were available for the work in hand. They were terribly human; but they were really interested in their own good, in the preservation of their free institutions for "their children and their children's children" — to use the phrase of the time — all because they really and honestly believed what they had been taught and wanted to preserve it.

### *SOME THORNS AMONG THE ROSES*

ALL this is not to assert or even to hint that the rose had no thorns. There were among the Pioneers ambitious men so glib of tongue that power of expression outran knowledge with more of suavity than of ability or sincerity. They were, for the most part, lawyers with little practice but a certain faculty for pushing to the front. They were seldom real students of public questions and had little executive capacity. Now and again such a man would make his way into a State legislature; the district attorneyship was a favorite resort; and, occasionally, such a mediocrity would get into office as attorney general. Within our period only one of this type came to be governor and his failure, following the plain, simple characters wont to hold this office, was conspicuous. It would be possible for such cheap politicians to fool the public for a time; but quite uniformly they were pursued by that avenging Nemesis always found in the underlying good sense of a plain, unassuming people.

It has often been mentioned as a reproach that the early politicians courted the farmer. This is something easy of

## Some Thorns Among the Roses

understanding : there was nobody else to deal with. Theirs was the only interest, the only class, and even those who did not really till the soil were the coadjutors, the dependents of those who did; besides, the men chosen for office whether subject to the serious charge of being politicians — nowhere else in the world a reproach — were themselves drawn from the farm, familiar with its work and its problems. They had, no doubt, the common quality of desiring personal success : but this was impossible without studying and knowing the interests of the electors to whom they must make appeal.

Now and again, when really great economic issues were forced to the front, it was the inherent honesty and common sense of the voters that saved even many pretentious public men from going wrong. It was the assurance that support would be forthcoming that enabled the larger men, who in small numbers in both parties found their way into public life, to count upon support in their courageous efforts to avert dangerous heresies of one kind and another. Every State in the West had a fair proportion of such men of ability and courage. As a result, even with the increasing pressure in favor of demagogic movements — made sometimes from within the State, though generally from without — public sanity was preserved to a degree quite surprising.

It was a long time before the foreign-born population acquired sufficient importance to make it necessary to cater to it. In the end — and this was reached at about the same time all over the North — the nomination of an Irishman,

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a German, or a Scandinavian, became common. It was a vicious custom, both in purpose and effect, but it never was the nuisance and peril it has since become. In the course of time the Irish-born appeared in a mild form. He was generally a contractor, looking for business in bridges, public buildings, streets, or like improvements. He developed in towns when they reached a population of from three thousand to ten thousand. He could command enough votes from compatriots to influence a town council — of which he was commonly a member from the slum ward — and thus to make the local politicians take notice. He had little influence in the congressional district, none in the State at large, and not much in the county where the shrewd, successful farmers soon learned how to take care of him. He was pestiferous in intent rather than in reality, a sign of future harm rather than of much potential evil at the time.

### NOT A FIELD FOR GREAT MEN

NOTICE has already been taken of the fact that in its Territorial relation the State did not start with even a single outstanding character. There was no man to compare either in the nominal position conferred by official place with William Henry Harrison of Indiana, Lewis Cass in Michigan, or Edward Coles in Illinois, and no outstanding newcomers who forged to the front almost automatically like Andrew Jackson in Tennessee, Henry Clay in Kentucky, Rufus King in Ohio, or Thomas H. Benton in Missouri. Most nearly corresponding to the latter class, in

## Not a Field for Great Men

much more modest degree, was James W. Grimes who went to the Territory when little more than a boy and served in the lower house of the first Legislative Assembly. His activity, limited to a narrow sphere, continued until he was elected Governor in 1854 as the candidate of a newly-organized Republican party. He did not reach a position which gave him even a chance of wider recognition until his entrance into the United States Senate in 1859, soon after which the Civil War intervened with its dominance of the new military element. His career was highly respectable, though never brilliant, until his commanding act of independence in voting with six other Senators of his party against the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. The partisan obloquy which followed this act probably shortened his life; so that he died when only fairly past fifty — a service too short to give him, outside this one act, a permanent place in national political history. Only one other man, John A. Kasson, to whom fate was not wholly kind, could be claimed as belonging fairly in the first rank of contemporary statesmanship.

In a State with such one-sided politics there was little chance for distinction, so that in comparison Kentucky with Clay and Crittenden, Illinois with Lincoln and Douglas, Indiana with Hendricks, McDonald, and the younger Harrison, Ohio with Sherman, Thurman, and Garfield, Iowa never came into the competition. All these States not only started far ahead in time and leadership, but no one of them had filled up with such rapidity. There were great gifts, but they made necessary a longer time to reach a

## Pioneer Foundations

fair degree of assimilation. Then, too, the fact is that its settlers, drawn mainly from the newer West, rather kept their political eyes upon the districts of origin than upon their new citizenship. In a way they were hyphenated Iowans and thus commanded a local recognition which did not carry them into the broader fields of the nation. Men of the largest ability did not, therefore, develop political ambitions, so that it is perhaps true to say that its Governors, Senators, Congressmen, or members of the cabinet were doomed to a mediocrity which it might otherwise have escaped.

Certainly, at the same age, it had not compared in talent with the States from which it drew most of its early population. By the time that the second generation which, in other parts of the West, had been so productive of talent and energy, came upon the scene, the great commercial development which followed the Civil War drove its young men into law and business, and many of the best and most promising into other States. Within the period under review the State did not push its best men to the front in public life—mainly due, no doubt, to the smallness and the monotony of the work to be done; politics, like nature, does not waste its best material. Another hampering tendency was found in the narrowness of the religious development. This was not relieved everywhere at the same time, the rate of advance on the edges of settlement being very slow, so that Iowa, being on the periphery and not at the center, had to wait for relief from bigotry, narrowness, and intolerance.

## Not a Field for Great Men

Still another drawback was the fact that geographical remoteness and the one-sidedness of party sentiment kept away real leaders from other parts of the country. There was no magnet to draw them. No prominent outside Republican could find in Iowa a temptation to speak in his party campaign. Its vote was as regular as the tides, and certainly the outside Democrat would not waste his breath in talking to its audiences. So, the people of the State were compelled to be provincial whether their tastes and desires made them so or not. They had no other choice than to hug their isolation and glory in it. This had an effect beyond politics in that the people, not knowing much about celebrities, came to ignore them.

As these settlers on the Iowa prairies had lived with their own, so they would continue to do. This was broken down, to some extent, by the Civil War and the meetings of the various military associations which from time to time drew the higher commanders from the outside. Henry Clay whose ambitions and charm took him everywhere and gave him a popularity still without precedent had died before Iowa was more than started on the way to State recognition. Even the patient Lincoln, now looked upon as the proudest product of the Pioneer genius, as always bearing upon his strong shoulders the destiny of a nation was not a hero to his next State neighbors while he lived; his acceptance in this capacity came to the public of the West, as it did to the rest of the country, only when he had taken his place among the undying myths of American history.

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### ENFORCED HEROES OF THE COMMONPLACE

So this new State had to go on as best it could in its public life, content with the second or third rate but never deceiving itself as so often happens by putting them forward with the assumption that in men it was dealing with the first-rate. But if the State was not permitted to do anything notable in the way of producing constructive statesmen it was also saved from responsibility for making or sheltering the pestiferous demagogues in which Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri, and later Nebraska, showed such unusual productiveness.

Too much is always expected of the people of a new State in this one matter: the production of commanding men. The fact is overlooked that it takes a long time even under the most favorable circumstances for a people to develop a central or outstanding character of its own and with it the leadership necessary to give it expression. It is clear that each self-governing community must have this before it can hope to make, for itself or in competition with its associate communities or the whole, a place of its own in contemporary life. To expect or even to do anything conspicuous would be an interference with orderly growth. In its early days it has all it can do to uphold the traditions its people have inherited and thus to prepare them for playing an honorable part in the scheme of representative institutions.

Iowa, therefore, had neither call nor time to develop great leaders or vital issues—the two being, indeed inseparable. Its material growth was so rapid that it could



## Enforced Heroes of the Commonplace

only consider national issues, whether large or small, and do its best with them. In fact, other than slavery the big things were out of the way; banking had to wait until two generations after 1850 had passed before it was to be put upon a fairly safe foundation; while internal improvements, roads, education, and pioneer policies in general, so far as they were separate or new developments, had been already settled in a fashion in the older States of the West. Neither as a State nor in leadership was Iowa to be an illustration of genius, whether glorified or neglected.

The effect of this feverish political activity was to render its purpose dim and uncertain. The fundamental rights, as they are called (which in reality were only the powers that men needed when they became thicker on the ground and associated more closely with each other than had been possible in primitive times with a thin population, rude transportation facilities in the days of a small and secluded world) had all been won. Long before our so-called institutions were thought of, their guiding principles had been settled; all that the last of the Pioneers did was to adapt them to modern conditions. For this reason the thing we call politics has long been little more than a series of unending contests between the ins and the outs: there was practically no difference in aim, only in those of method — something inherent in human nature.

In the development of America this tendency of contests to limit themselves to the activities and interests of the Big-endians and the Little-endians, the thing called politics while absorbing was seldom important and never

## Pioneer Foundations

picturesque. Our great experiment in what was called popular government was accepted without question, and the movements that played about it in name had become not the science of government at all but attractive games of skill. As principles entered hardly at all into account, it has always been found necessary, in the end, when anything real was to be done to throw away the elaborate double-engined machinery and for the mass of the people — those with something at stake, whether labor, wages, or capital — to unite in a kind of unconscious agreement and then to act together.

### PARTY POLITICS SETTLES NOTHING

If any observing man will consult his experience or probe down to his sources of knowledge he will find that the honest and efficient conduct of a war, the correction of an admitted evil, large or small, the creation of some new force, has never been possible until after an empire, a country, a State, a municipal corporation, a church, a community of any size, had thrown away its parties, its factions, its petty interests, and had come together as a whole resolved to do its work. History does not afford an example of a party which as such has freed a slave, saved the public honor, conserved the fruit of industry in the form of property, or corrected an abuse. The will to do these and all other things of import has first found lodgment through the mind and the work of a leader who has carried them down among the mass of the people. When done, the agitator or the advocate of party too small to see that the

## Party Politics Settles Nothing

half cannot be as much as the whole or work by itself always falsely claims the credit for doing it.

So, the farther the migrant who made America went to the Westward, the more clearly he saw that he was increasingly making appeal to a homogeneous people who understood the needs of all and not those of some fraction of itself powerless to do anything. However important, separated from his fellows, he may have thought himself, whatever superiority he might claim, he always proved in the end that he could do nothing alone. It then became clear to him that as it took the action of all to protect life against the Indian : even a stockade divided against itself would invite and insure the ruin of all. This led the Pioneer to realize that institutions, inert and dead inherently, did not develop men who alive, moving, and active, had to make their institutions for the use of all, not for a part.

Thus, the Pioneer was sincerely republican, attached to representative ideas, national in scope, not to those supposed to be universal, and he did the best he could in the choice of the men who were to exercise power for him or over him. The resulting governmental machine was rude and crude; but it did represent the majesty of the law.

Thus the last of the American Pioneers, like his neighbors and predecessors, was true to the traditions that had made his country what it was; he met emergencies as they arose; and, being himself a human product, he worked, when associated in government, for what he deemed the good of all. He was no more a tyrant than he was a slave.



*BUILDINGS AND ROADS*



WHERE EVERYTHING HAD TO BE MADE

As simple as the thing itself may seem it is by no means an easy task to describe and analyze the industry of the Pioneer life. Primarily it is a large subject, but it is made larger and more important by the rapidity and magnitude of the whole Western movement. It is so different from what is now seen in the collective occupations of a given community or State anywhere, that it is difficult to understand how only a little more than half a century away such primitive conditions could have persisted.

And yet, if even the alphabet of our earlier development is to be learned some fair comprehension must be reached of the economic surroundings of that day. It is almost impossible to present to the modern reader a picture of how these people lived when there was not a mile of railroad in Iowa, when more than half of our period had passed away, or to realize that the people were subduing, creative and happy, buying and selling, devising and making, taking their pay in money when they could get it, but living still largely in the age of barter to which their forerunners had been almost bound during their tedious journey from the seaboard.

Large as the subject is, running into so many grooves now unfamiliar, making so many ruts that had to be filled before the present industrial road could be fairly completed,

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it represents the stage of development reached by its time. From the Alleghenies westward, and from Tennessee and Missouri northward, the same general methods were employed, the same tools or rude machines were in use, and men subjected themselves to the same hard training for rewards which, judged by modern standards, seem petty and unattractive.

In dealing with education it is often spoken of as something to be written on the blank piece of paper wrongly supposed to stand for the mind of the child. As applied to a sentient human figure, the comparison is ridiculous; but it does seem fairly to describe an area like Iowa when long held back from settlement it was at last thrown open. Access to its fifty-five thousand square miles of land, of unknown, but, as was soon recognized, of un-examined fertility was all at once opened along one side. One settler after another crossed the great river on horseback or by raft or rude ferry at widely separated points, generally as an individual, sometimes as a member of a small group. He only knew that he did not have to fight his way; so no colony was needed; he had no use for stockades, or guards, or, even except as a hunter, for firearms; he had not even the advantage that his predecessor had, as the Indian and the buffalo had not been before him to mark out along the most eligible lines the trail that he could safely follow as the natural path between two given points : there were not enough Indians to do this unconscious service; there were no houses; only here and there, a rude wigwam; no cultivation of the soil except an occasional



## Where Everything Had To Be Made

small patch, planted to corn but imperfectly cultivated. There were no facilities for grinding the grain even when produced : nothing but rude sets of stones for crushing it by hand; no smith or carpenter had been seen; no vehicle, however crude or rough, had crossed the wide, easy-flowing river. No regular industry had found development anywhere within its borders. For the white man's purpose it was literally a blank.

The government that owned the land so far as it had been acquired at all had not yet passed or confirmed title to a single rod. And yet, with all this before him, with no enemy to check or arrest his progress, the settler and his fellows were as distinctly limited as if they had access to only a landing-place on the river's bank. Each had to do everything for himself. There were no engineers to go ahead and blaze a trail for him; although he had gone to territory distinctively prairie, he was still in leash to the forest. He had no axemen to clear the spaces ahead of him. There were no soldiers to make roads; the Pioneer could go only so far as the surveyor had marked his series of artificial metes and bounds. He could only advance as fast and as far as he and his fellows were able to carry with them those cognate industries which would enable him, in due time, to add another mile-wide strip to its occupied predecessors. Even then he had to take with him a blacksmith shop, a gristmill, and a sawmill; and he could not go far without a carpenter and a wheelwright. He had probably never even heard that there was anywhere in all the world a plumber or an architect; even if he had come

## Pioneer Foundations

from the most highly developed city, he would have had no use for such helpers.

In short, the settler really had before him the equivalent of this fabled white sheet of paper and he proceeded to write upon its surface. All his first signs and marks were material. He had to provide food, shelter, and clothing. As he had passed the time when he could find the first of these by killing wild animals, he had perforce to carry with him supplies and the simple machinery and the skill required to furnish all things for himself. He had his own hands, the raw land, and neighbors more or less remote united with him; with these he had to work until in a few years he as one of a multitude had built one State after another. He could neither have government help, nor borrow money for development. In all the financial centers of Christendom or Jewry, there was no banker who would have accepted him as a debtor and no government which could do more than permit him under the general operation of economic law to provide himself with funds.

### . THE HOUSE AND ITS MAKING

IN the passage through the great wilderness there had been little change in the style of building — it had become almost an order of architecture — employed by the Pioneer. It was invariably of wood; whether constructed of logs or of lumber, it was of the square packing-box pattern, which had given shelter and satisfied the taste of the earliest colonist in Virginia, New England, the Middle States, and the new jurisdictions. For well-nigh a hundred years when,

## The House and its Making

along the Atlantic Coast, it was desired to build a church or a house of bricks it had been customary to bring them from England, with the exception that in New York and New Jersey they were sought in Holland — but this was rare. The people were passing through that age of wood from which their ancestors in the countries of origin had emerged within a period then comparatively recent. Most of the original houses were built of logs : the fact of being born in a log house did not bring luck to the person.

This box of a house was less simple than is often thought. It was made of logs chosen for straightness and for an even grain, about ten inches or a foot square, after hewing. The man who could hew them straight — almost equal to a piece of sawn timber — had to be something of an artist in addition to having the strength requisite for the handling of the great broadaxe weighing eight or ten pounds. His work was laid out with the utmost care. He was not of necessity a carpenter; indeed, the artisan trained in wood-work was saved for making and setting doors, windows, and, after the time of the primitive puncheon was over, for laying floors of the best and easiest worked wood obtainable. The dovetailing of these logs so that when finished the corners with short and not unsightly projections would be perfectly squared was a delicate operation — a finishing process always reserved, either in doing or oversight, for that man in the neighborhood with the truest eye, the steadiest hand, and the most experience : he only could give the touch and finish necessary to insure the tightness which would exclude or temper cold and heat.

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The four walls once up to the proper height — ceilings were seldom more than eight and a half or nine feet — this wooden wall was completed by what was known as chinks which were carefully fitted, irregular, wedge-shaped pieces of wood about four inches thick by five or six in width. There were two kinds, inside and outside chinking — that is, sufficient in size to leave between them only a small vacant space between the logs. That used on the outside was not so carefully prepared. This done, the whole of the space between the logs was daubed with as good a mortar as the neighborhood afforded.

Sometimes it was difficult to find a stone that would burn into lime of acceptable quality. Often the latter had to be hauled many miles so that a limekiln was itself a profitable raw material. It was a matter of search before buying or entering land along the stream to find such a quarry for the discovery of which the most efficient Pioneer had a real gift. It not only had its value as material, but through it the owner could command the necessary labor to carry on his business and pay for it in kind — sometimes almost the only way to get assistance at all.

Such a house, with a proper foundation, with the usual cellar under half of it, once finished, presented walls almost as solid as stone or brick, and because of their thickness was a protection against storm, heat, or cold. Sometimes it was daubed with a fine clay, having the necessary adhesive power, but this was for an inferior order of house or for temporary use. If it was of one room it would generally be about sixteen feet in width and from the same

## The House and its Making

length up to twenty feet; if double it would have two rooms of these dimensions with a six or eight foot hall between them, all under the same roof — though such a house was rare in the earliest days; it generally came later, with the quick prosperity incident to added population and the growth of a market.

The chimney was the most important feature. It was generally built of brick, poor in quality, as good clay beds were either scarce or their discovery long delayed. The fireplace ranged from about two to three feet in depth and from four to six feet in width. Like chimneys from the beginning of the world it often smoked, mainly because from the scarcity of materials it had not sufficient height. Sometimes it was made of slats skillfully rived out from some hard wood and then built up almost like the logs of the house itself. It was necessary to daub this very heavily inside and out, to protect it from fire. Of course, in such cases the brick fireplace would itself serve as the foundation for such a chimney probably to a height of from five to seven feet or up to the average mantel.

The roof was generally made of clapboards about thirty inches long, in effect large shingles rived out with much skill from white oak, black walnut, or other straight hard wood — now and then, from the linden or some soft wood — though these involved too much risk from fire to justify their use except as a necessity. Such houses were built one after another by the combined labor of the men in the new neighborhood. When a settler went six or eight miles away he had to draw help from this distance, though it

## Pioneer Foundations

was not often that this was common anywhere in the West — first, because of the Indians on earlier scenes, and then from habit and the necessity for association.

### *HOW HOUSES SUCCEEDED EACH OTHER*

I HAVE described, thus briefly, the best of the log houses because they were the earliest. They had their grades, the quality, the finish, and the comfort all depending upon the individual; but, for the later Pioneer the sawmill often either preceded settlement or followed it so closely that the frame house soon became the standard. It still had the packing-box shape, generally one story and an attic, and differed little from the American standard for frame houses adopted when the material could be sawed instead of hewn. When the shingle-saw attachment came into general use, the abundant black walnut along the rivers and the oak on the bluffs made as fine a quality of shingle as could be desired. The lath-saw was still longer delayed in development, so that laths were rived out of oak or lighter woods with such skill that only slowness of production interfered with satisfaction of the demand made by incoming settlers.

It was inevitable that no distinctive architecture should develop out of the Pioneer times. Houses which, like everything else, had to be utilitarian were constructed upon the simplest lines. They were rectangular, as both convention and nature's lines of least resistance dictated, generally without a porch; so that log, frame, brick, or stone, following each other, maintained the original form and appear-

## How Houses Succeeded Each Other

ance with only small variations. Often houses of different materials succeeded one another up to four in number on the same site. Perhaps the most notable of late illustrations of this orderly succession was the place that finally came to be known as "Arbor Lodge", the home in Nebraska City of the late Julius Sterling Morton, Secretary of Agriculture under President Cleveland, though others, scarcely less striking, marked the evolution of homes throughout the West.

While the products had changed on the way West (tobacco disappearing) the tradition of the barn remained. As in the beginning so it was at the end of the Pioneer's tedious journey, the barn was often more imposing in appearance and more costly and elaborate than the house. This peculiarity is one that has distinguished the true yeoman, whatever his nationality or upon whatever scene he has brought his genius to bear. Good reasons for this existed in plenty: the increase in livestock, the necessity for great mows while the threshing-floor was in use, were more rapid than that of the family so that the houses might be completed or enlarged to meet needs; but barns, stables, sheds, were much less flexible. Generally these were grouped about a hundred yards from the farmhouse, often across a road. Care had to be taken to get far enough away to minimize the danger from fire. The almost universal peasant habit of keeping animals next to the house lost its vogue after the disappearance of the hostile Indian; and its survival marked the difference in origin and outlook between the one class and the other. In early New England so

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strong was the opposition, that it had even been forbidden by law.\*

### BREAKING THE LAND

IN the earliest days, after the settler had provided the most necessary of his buildings and had added to them according to his needs, he began the breaking of his land. By this time, though not wholly reconciled to the broad prairie which had no tree in sight, he had even then some of the advantages which the larger areas of timber land were to increase. While crossing the wilderness he was limited to a plough little less primitive than that used in the days of the Gracchi. There was, however, enough level, smooth land to encourage the gradual development of the large prairie-plough for cutting the roots of the native grass. The river bottoms being sufficiently extensive to justify the use of this new implement, the farmer and the inventor used their opportunities. The native grasses, whether they grew on the bottoms or the uplands, rooted themselves very shallowly but with great firmness; experience, however, soon taught that the need was an instrument which, while breaking these roots, would at the same time turn a furrow so wide as still to leave the operation profitable on an economic basis.

More than any other single agency, it was also to enforce coöperation. Out of a group of neighbors, each would have from one to three or four yoke of oxen, some of them large, powerful animals, from five to ten years old, well-

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\* Weeden's *Economic History of New England*, Vol. I, p. 406.



## Breaking the Land

broken and trained to the heaviest tasks. These would be combined as a single source of power, known as a team, and, managed by their owners, go from one piece of land to another until the season was over. The plough was an effective machine, rather heavy and crude, not much changed for many years in its form or weight. It was fitted with levers, and had attached to the front, two wheels of different size which enabled the operator at the handles to keep it in the ground, to regulate the depth of the furrow, and to carry it through the brush, briars, or roots in its way.

A proper plough cut twenty-four inches : and to operate it, in land of average difficulty, from eight to ten yoke of oxen were required. These were chosen, as to leaders and wheelers, with almost as much care as a coachman would have taken with his team of horses when he desired to make fancy movements upon the road or in a track competition. The team could then be completed in the center with animals less well-trained and even smaller. From three to four men were required for the management of such an outfit, and the task of driving the furrow in a fairly straight line across the field was one requiring much experience and a good measure of skill. To do this the guiding of the leaders was scarcely less important than the handling of the plough through this uncharted land. It could not be done by any rule except that of necessity directed by common sense and experience.

Once the land was laid out, that is, the furrow run, the rest was comparatively easy. The oxen were guided

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by the use of long whips — twenty feet being not unusual — and, as seems inseparable from the driving of oxen, with a noise which at sight seemed both excessive and unnecessary, often with expletives that certainly made no appreciable addition to efficiency in either drivers or team. The progress across the field was slow almost beyond anything imaginable in human affairs; but this great furrow with the plough cutting its two feet of soil, turning patches of brush as if they had been straws, was, considering the importance and difficulty of the operation, really rapid in its results.

The season for sod breaking ranged from around the first of May until probably the last week in June by which time the grass had become so high that it could no longer be handled. During the first part of this period a boy drilled seed corn along the outer edge of alternate furrows of the upturned soil which, when properly done, turned over as a whole as if it had been cardboard. When necessary the sod was trampled down firmly. This grew up with the generic name of sod corn, though early plantings would often almost reach maturity and produce roasting ears and enough fodder to pay the cost of breaking, planting, and cutting. Many a Pioneer, more expert or more fortunate than his fellows, grew upon his farm during the first full year of effective occupation enough corn to pay all costs and carry him over until the same land would give him an ample crop the second year and thereafter. It was literally the process of tickling the soil and reaping a harvest.

## Fencing in the New Farm

### FENCING IN THE NEW FARM

WITH his buildings up and his land broken to the plough, the Pioneer farmer must make enclosures. So long as he was in or near the timber he could do this only by a worm fence : another American institution. It grew out of the early customs of Virginia when, after many difficulties and through many vicissitudes, it was enacted into law that livestock should be fenced out rather than either herded or fenced in.\* There was timber to the torture of all concerned, and so it was easy both to devise and enforce such a law. From that time until the timber was exhausted, or the railroad overtook the Pioneer, the worm fence was one of the necessary, though costly and somewhat rude agencies of progress. Iowa, being the last of the Pioneer States, was also the last which used or could use this form of fence to any extent. Perhaps a brief description of it as an actual force during this period may be justified.

As the Pioneer went on his westward journey, this crooked structure winding its way over wilderness, river bottom, and prairie came to be known merely as a rail fence — often acquiring the nickname of snake fence. It grew in elaborateness and certainly the legal height of four-and-one-half feet, as originally fixed in Virginia, was considerably increased, probably due to the use of larger rails or sleepers or to the growing size or aggressiveness of the domestic animals included or excluded until it averaged

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\* An interesting account of the difficulties and trials which led to this law and also a description of the worm fence of that time will be found in Bruce's *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I, pp. 313-18.

## Pioneer Foundations

when perfectly developed about five-and-a-half feet. Often it ran a foot higher. It was composed normally of eight rails, the bottom one resting upon short hardwood sleepers under each corner, the latter so buried that swine could not dig under and yet raised enough to prevent decay.

It was essential to choose as straight a rail as could be found, fairly large as it must serve for a foundation. A rail was ten feet long and the horizontal depth of a fence from its straight outer line was four feet. A panel of it, that is the length of two rails, when carefully made covered a space of one rod, sixteen-and-a-half feet; the size of a field so enclosed could be accurately estimated by counting the number of corners, or locks, as they were sometimes called further South. After the foundation had been laid ahead for some rods the building of the fence proper began. Each rail for the various tiers was chosen with care until six had been laid.

Crooked rails were so turned and tried that no possible chance remained for the energetic outside marauder to get in, or, when penned inside, to get out. The corners were so laid that they would satisfy the requirements of a plumb, although one was seldom used: so accurate was the builder's eye. The projecting corners had also to present two parallel straight lines made by the inner and outer locks of the fence. When the six rails had been laid it was then ready for the stakes and the riders — which gave it the additional name of stake-and-rider fence — in distinction to the plain structure — generally used for dividing fields — without these aids to strength and height.

## Fencing the New Farms

The setting of the stakes, generally to a depth ranging from a foot to eighteen inches, was a work requiring muscle, care, and skill. These had to be so straight that when the fence was completed they would present the two fairly accurate double parallel lines required by taste. The under rider, chosen for its straightness, ran crosswise between the fork made by the stakes to the top of the sixth rail and their junction was firmly clamped by the stakes. When this was done, came the choice of the top rider. This had to be heavy and in many cases was shifted many times before one was found that would just fit. It was then carefully inspected, any discoverable irregularities removed and whatever the defect, it would be so corrected that a new fence, however long, would bear the same examination given to a house or a newly laid railroad track. There was one universal formula both for the making and the judging of a rail fence like that described: it must be hog-tight, bull-strong, and horse-high.

All this care in fence construction was the absolute necessity of the time. Those familiar only with ordinary, well-fed, lazy, domestic animals have no conception of the cleverness as well as the strength of each of the species mentioned when running at large, idle and mischievous, often uncared-for and hungry, outside a fence, with a rich growth of half ripe corn on the other side: only a few feet away from a feast. If there was anywhere a hole that could be enlarged by digging, the hog's snout would find it and it took many precautions to overcome his ingenuity, power of calculation, and that persistence which nothing could

## Pioneer Foundations

surpass. Oxen, especially powerful animals from five to ten years old, when turned out to pasture, however rich it might be, seemed to have a genius, hardly to be suspected, for finding weak spots in the fence which, in like manner, was the only object between them and a bovine banquet. The horse also ran at large with equal freedom. In his marauding hours he developed on his own account jumping abilities that would not have discredited the best-trained, highbred hunter, come from where he might. As these horses and cattle were almost sure to gorge themselves, as well as to destroy, it was to the interest of their owners that the neighborhood fences should be kept in the most effective condition. Probably more lawsuits grew out of such cases than from all others together : so that the primary test of a good farmer came to be the efficiency of his fences. Twice a year, in spring before planting and in fall after harvesting, they were inspected for repairs or renewals.

### PARTITION FENCES AND PASTURAGE

THERE was seldom complete neighborly coöperation in partition fences. Now and then, in the earliest days, two farmers would turn an equal allotment of livestock to pasture upon the wild grass or the corn stalks belonging to their common holdings, or one would purchase the interest of the other; but, in general, a partition fence soon became as much of a necessity as one on the road side of a field. Individuality was so strong that men seldom consented to share their fields. They would help each other

## Partition Fences and Pasturage

in sowing, planting, or harvest, or exchange labor in building, threshing, or fence building, but each looked upon his individual holding of land as something peculiarly his own, as part of his home, something sacred upon which no other could poach either by prescription or courtesy. They might work together in building what when finished would be a uniform partition fence; but this was done, if at all, in order to assure that there should be no diversion at any point by even the fraction of an inch from the line as fixed by the original survey. This, too, was an outgrowth of the yeoman spirit: a survival of customs and manners settled long before the prairie was even thought of as a possible place for people.

As there were no common lands, like those in New England and Virginia, animals were turned out to graze upon the unsold government land or on the acres held by speculators, so that, until settlement was fairly complete, there was practically no restriction and little herding in the immediate neighborhood. When the number of horses and cattle, to which after the early days were added sheep, became too large for accommodation near home, they were consolidated into herds or flocks, in which the beginnings of the cowboy were present. Some neighborhood boy, often of studious tendencies and known to be trustworthy, would be entrusted with two to three hundred head of cattle which, driven away from fifty to a hundred miles to government land, would grow or fatten for the summer upon the lush growth of grass, mainly of the bluestem variety, and be returned to their owners after the first severe frost.

## Pioneer Foundations

### GARDEN FENCES, GATES, AND WELLS

ON the best farms the rail fence soon disappeared from the front of houses. It was succeeded by a panel fence which was made of carefully split flat rails, almost as thin and regular as sawn planks, fastened to bars carefully dovetailed into mortised posts. Sometimes the frame of such a structure would be used to make a fence of palings almost as carefully rived out as clapboards. A picket fence was made of sharpened stakes, irregular in shape, driven into the ground and fastened upon a frame like the other except that the place of its lower horizontal bar was taken by the ground. These forms of fence were mostly used around the farm gardens and the houses in the neighborhood villages.

An attempt was made at an early day to find shrubs fit for hedges. The osage orange was long a favorite; but the severity of the winters and the almost terrifying fertility of the soil which soon ran bushes up into trees useless for any purpose early showed them to be impracticable. Besides, they took up an unusual space by reason of this tendency to size and to depth of rooting. In due course, when the railroad came bringing a supply of pine fencing, other methods of making enclosures tended to disappear. Oak and locust posts, if not found in plenty, were also brought in by rail.

Gates were an early and always an insoluble problem. The difficulty both in opening and in keeping them shut and the weakness of hinges, whether homemade of wood or from some remote iron foundry, were always in evi-



## Garden Fences, Gates, and Wells

dence. Many a boy had a right to objurgate the inventor of gates, because upon himself nearly always fell the task of opening and shutting these methods for ingress and egress. There was also a good deal of vicious meddling with them at night when animals were turned in through them to the ruin of the growing crops or the waste of stored grain. This was a favorite act of an enemy or a jealous neighbor. Envy, hatred, and malice, from which mankind has been praying deliverance during many hundreds of years, were not wanting in the Pioneer life and they often took on this particular form of mischief as well as many others that lay outside the reach of the law because almost beyond detection and proof.

Water was mostly procured from wells and on bottom lands was generally reached at a depth of about twenty feet. Filtered from the streams, generally through sand, it was soft and had also the merit of being cold. On the uplands, especially in the southern half of Iowa, water was reached at about thirty feet. It was of good quality, cold but inclined to hardness. The old-fashioned sweep of primitive man was in use at first, as it still is. Sometimes it was succeeded by the windlass, carrying single or double buckets; but as the farmer grew able and his needs were studied there came the chain pump followed by the suction pump, operated at first by hand and finally by the windmill. Cases have been known where within a period of less than twenty years all these devices were used in succession in the same well by a progressive farmer.

## Pioneer Foundations

### THE MAKING OF ROADS

EVEN in the matter of roads the Pioneer was dependent upon his own efforts. Other settlements of civilians — especially those in western Europe — were made after the soldier had blazed the way through the forests and opened, with the most practical engineering talent known to history, roads which with improvements carried on in the same way are still the wonder of the world. The settler had to be his own engineer and axeman, to dig, ditch, and grade, so far as these were possible, and thus carry his roads from one newly organized road district into another, and from township to township and then from county to county. The Territory, after the Indian title had been extinguished, in one zone after another could not do much in the way of making a road to the interior. It had no scheme or program. It could have neither, because it could not pass even in an exploring capacity beyond the land acquired by the Federal government.

So, as the settler pushed forward he organized in his township, both by custom and under the law, a series of road districts which often long remained the most important political centers in the new district. The Governor and Council were far away so that the settler knew or cared little about them. The Federal surveyor passed out of their ken as soon as he had made plats and filed them in the government land offices; but, working under general laws as his predecessors had been doing for three-quarters of a century and ready to coöperate with all comers, the settler had made roads through the woods for more than twelve

## The Making of Roads

hundred miles. In pursuance of this object he had felled the great trees which grew in a soil of surpassing richness—the gift of producing mud being one of the primary evidences of this quality. He threw the trunks into the chosen way, only to see them sink, in many cases, into the almost bottomless morass; he made corduroy roads, the wonder of those who saw and the torment of those who had to use them; and finally he worked up to plank roads, and when he found stone and gravel he built company turnpikes and very properly charged toll upon them. His task was one of infinite toil under the most severe of difficulties and his reward was the grumbling and the misrepresentation of ignorant travelers and writers, foreign and domestic. These men, in order to see for their own pleasure or profit, what their fellow had done, thought to find, among a handful of people, roads like those existing in older regions after centuries of time and an immeasurable amount of effort. They had expected the Pioneer to do for them in a decade or so what was to take him another fifty years to do for himself and the world.

When Iowa came upon the national scene, the difficulties in the way of road-making had been little relieved. It was necessary as at first to creep up the streams which as usual meant going through the woods. Even when he crossed the divides between streams or emerged upon the prairie, as the settler did later, there was little improvement in ease or facilities. He found little stone and almost no gravel. As he went further he discovered that his road must follow one straight line until it came to a given point, when, turn-

## Pioneer Foundations

ing a right angle, it would run another restricted distance continually repeating the process — until it had zigzagged to its predestined end. A road could not then run direct upon a straight line between two points. It must not cut across a county, a township, a section, or a farm, real or potential. It must run between a series of future farms; otherwise the symmetry of the geometrical scheme would be broken or the work must be done over.

There was no need for an engineer, or even for a man with more than a natural eye for favorable lines; because he could not have run the road in any other place unless it was a deviation a mile farther in a given direction. Now and then, in the earliest settlement, it would have to deflect a short distance out of the line to avoid a slough, or a hill, or to seek a ford; but, if so, it came back to a straight line after it had fairly passed the obstruction. When the time came for building a bridge the road swung in again so that it might run on without a quaver from the rectilinear.

### CRUDENESS OF ROADS

THE early roads were of necessity crudely constructed : the only wonder was that they could be made at all. They were the product of the plough and the scraper (the latter then a rude instrument) with some help from a field-roller made from a peeled log, generally of sycamore because of its weight. Working in a loose, black loam without even clay as a binder, without stone or gravel, often over a surface so nearly level that drainage was difficult, forced

## The Crudeness of Roads

by the absence of bridges to creep along the low, often marshy, bottom lands until it came to an eligible site which during low water would be a ford and in floods a ferry, the task was one that would have taxed the resources and the ingenuity of an experienced road-builder working with instruments, materials, and men in an old and settled region.

It was here that the resource and adaptability of the Pioneer served him well. With his quick eye both for the practical and for an emergency, without any trained or technical supervision, he worked away in patience year after year until he had so heaped up dirt over a long distance that at its best estate either when dry weather came to his aid or the ground was hard frozen he had something that the King's Highway could not excel. Over it the heaviest load could be drawn or the most famous driving speed reached and maintained; let the frost but heave up the ground in the spring, or the early fall rains soak down to their uttermost depths and there were not enough oxen in a neighborhood to draw a quarter-ton load to market or horses sufficiently swift to drive at more than a snail's pace. Perhaps, roughly speaking under the law of averages, the road was perfect for about four months in the year, practically impassable for another four, divided into two almost equal parts in spring and fall, and for the remainder was again nearly perfect for use with runners.

From mid-November to about the first of March the sled and the sleigh were in use as substitutes for wheeled vehicles. The early fall of snow filled up ruts and hid imperfections so that grain, hay, and wood were carried to

## Pioneer Foundations

market, logging was done, rails distributed for making and repairing fences, and fertilizers scattered over the fields, when indeed almost half the heavy miscellaneous work of the year was done. This saved time in the summer and, fortunately perhaps, rendered it unnecessary to maintain the roads at the high state of improvement otherwise requisite. On the prairie at a later day when board fences had become common, if the snow so drifted in the lanes as to make it impossible to break or clear them a sleet soon frozen into a heavy crust enabled the heaviest loads to be drawn on sleds over the drifts. This often continued for weeks together. If the heaps in the lanes became too mountain-like or irregular it was easy enough to drive over the fences on the snow-crust and make a trail in the adjoining field, returning to the road again at a favorable point.

### *THE DIFFERENT ORDERS OF ROADS*

THE roads were nominally of three kinds : State roads, sixty-six feet in width; county roads, from two rods to forty feet; and township roads, averaging perhaps thirty-three feet. All were made by the road districts. The county commissioners and the surveyor were supposed to be the links that connected one road district with another. They had a supervising power that was nominal, not directory. The road supervisor in each district was the responsible authority. The labor at his command was drawn from the qualified voters in his district, each of whom had to work out his poll-tax : two days labor with spade or shovel, or

## Surprising Measure of Success

one day with a team of horses and a wagon, roller, or scraper, as arranged with the supervisor.

In addition, a general road tax was levied for each of the classes of roads named and the proportion due from each taxpayer was certified to the supervisor, who in turn added it to the amount of the poll-tax, and it in turn was worked out at a wage fixed for a man alone or with a team of horses or a yoke of oxen. Like men, or other physical objects or counties, road districts differed in amounts of taxes and in the character of surface or soil of which they were composed. They also differed still more in knowledge, efficiency, honesty, and in the managing ability found in the supervisors. One might be useful and still have a useless neighbor, so that the good mile or so made by the first would only emphasize the bad mile or so of the helpless neighbor farther on. A harsh man would quarrel with his fellow-taxpayers; an easy one would fail to collect the amount levied. As there was little effective oversight, and seldom an understanding between supervisors along a given road, even through one township, the system was always breaking down of its own weight on the human side, while on the economic it was wasting the energies of a well-meaning community, persistently failing to command the results that all needed and really desired.

### SURPRISING MEASURE OF SUCCESS

HERE again the surprise is not that it failed, as it deserved, but that it achieved any results at all and laid the foundation for more favorable conditions. Another surprise is

## Pioneer Foundations

that with such roads coming out of vicious methods, any progress should have been possible: that such rank inefficiency should ever be overcome. With such drawbacks, added to unfavorable conditions to begin with, the system of transportation was not wholly ineffective. At a very early period, when interior counties were still more than one hundred and fifty miles from a railroad or a Mississippi steamboat, it was common for the best farmers to haul to market the surplus products of the year's labor. Loads of small grain, wheat, oats, buckwheat, seeds, corn shelled by hand, or dressed hogs now and then, the skins of the wild animals found in the woods along the streams, averaging perhaps over a ton for two horses, and considerably more for four, or even in rare emergency with oxen for power, would be drawn for long distances and sold in these remote markets for money to pay taxes or purchase necessities that could not be grown at home. These were, mainly, salt, sugar, coffee, and other groceries, or leather for boots, shoes, or harness.

Such wagons would be loaded both ways, bringing back supplies for their owners or neighbors or for the country store. These journeys often required four weeks and, as experiences, were about as lonely as any that men could have. Camping out, or stopping with farmers of their own type, often delayed by bad weather, illness, or loss of a horse, the wanderings of Ulysses could scarcely have been more trying; but, next to endurance, patience was the one great Pioneer trait. Nor was it all hardship. Such a man had many interesting adventures. He saw larger or at least



## The River Steamboat

more life than that immediately about him; he expanded his business training and experience; and he formed with remote and congenial people or with neighbors many friendships that stood him in good stead. These business errands had much to do with drawing further into the State men who, having already succeeded, carried their small but helpful resources inland to cast in their fortunes with a still newer community.

### THE RIVER STEAMBOAT

FEW developments of transportation in its various progressive steps have attracted or deserved more attention than the river steamboat. The first practical application of steam to water transport on the Hudson (after Napoleon with the shortsightedness incident to great men had rejected Fulton's invention for use in France) had soon spread its use in this country, until the sparse population along large interior rivers employed it to great advantage. This use was not possible on the great rivers of Europe where neither size, length, nor central jurisdiction or control was so favorable to rapid development. In America, the need for it was imperative if population was to grow and expand. Owing to great distances and the presence of large and rather deep streams, the extension of railroads was bound to be slow in comparison with the dense populations and small areas of other countries, with the result that this form of water transport was destined to have a longer period than elsewhere in which to show its capacity for usefulness. In the course of time this produced an interest

## Pioneer Foundations

which made the early steamboat on the Mississippi and the Ohio a modern wonder of the world.

A natural corollary was the extension of this service to the larger tributaries of the main rivers. During the flood season these streams, swollen to great size, afforded opportunities for boats of the second or third order to extend their voyages to growing communities in the interior. Iowa was not to be wholly deprived of these facilities. The earliest known developments were on the Iowa River and its complement the Red Cedar, streams second in size but along which settlement was earlier than any other that held out hope of navigability. The first steamboat to ascend this river reached, in June, 1841, Iowa City, then the capital of the Territory, where its captain and crew were welcomed as conquering heroes; and the greatest hopes were predicated upon its effect in developing an interior metropolis. These trips continued each recurring year until the oncoming railroad made them unnecessary.

The only other Iowa river upon which this form of transportation was to exercise any considerable influence was the Des Moines where, beginning about 1850 and continuing in a fitful way until about 1866, the advent of the steamboat was expected each year with an interest scarcely inferior to the earlier experiment on the Iowa. On the records of the government and in the meagre appropriations made for the improvement of rivers, it was recognized as a navigable stream. Although during six months of the year it was probably forded in a hundred places between the capital and the Mississippi at Keokuk, and was frozen

## The Spring Floods

over for another four months, for about one or perhaps two months after the ice had gone out in the spring it was really navigable. During this period steamboats of fair capacity, burning endless quantities of cordwood and to the eyes of the staring farmboy of the time veritable monsters made their way up the river. They were laden with products needed in exchange for grain and available raw materials. Their passage, either up or down, was long heralded; and the riverbanks with budding, ambitious villages now long since forgotten, were lined with spectators, probably not one of whom ever forgot the sight even if opportunity and fate afterwards carried him to the remotest parts of earth upon the most luxurious of ships. There was no essential difference, except in size, between these steamboats and those on the Mississippi, so famous in the literature of the time.

### *THE SPRING FLOODS*

As the beneficent character of the spring floods has been mentioned, their power of destruction ought not to be overlooked. When the thaws and rains began the streams, however small, became at once so choked with brush and the accumulations of fallen timber and logs awaiting the sawyer that the water, rushing with a force that had to find vent, adding the rapidly growing ice to the mass, overflowed so swiftly the adjacent bottom lands that they would sometimes be flooded to a depth of from ten to twenty-five feet. In the main, the earliest settlers were mostly massed in the path of the flood, and even those who lived on the

## Pioneer Foundations

neighboring hills or ridges generally had property, often in the shape of livestock with their necessary shelters, all subject to loss. At such times the adult population turned out to break the temporary ice-dams that caused these outbreaks and the remainder to view an annual spectacle, sometimes more interesting because more destructive than all others, but always awesome from both its danger and its majesty.

It was a busy time when the rude flatboats, either kept against such a visitation or quickly improvised, the simple dugout canoes, the row boats of all kinds for which there was no other use and hence no chance to acquire skill in handling — all came into requisition for the day or so, or often for only the few hours' duration of the peril. The sight of houses with families in them, stables containing horses, cattle, hogs, and implements, stacks of hay or grain leaving one small stream for the larger one that in normal times quietly received the meagre waters both appalled and attracted a people to whom the dramatic seldom came. In order to be saved such floating products had to be towed out of the stream into the new currents that swept over the adjoining land, thence into more shallow places when the endangered persons and animals (animals were only second in importance) could be retrieved and the buildings anchored in some shallow place against the time when the waters should recede.

It was not alone the danger to life and property that was interesting; the most important feature was the development somewhere of a leadership that would command re-

## The Spring Floods

spect and obedience from those habitually careless. At such times, all the available good-will, determination, and industry had to be mobilized and given instant effectiveness. No precautions could avert these visitations, of which one that was really destructive could be anticipated about once in five years, though no spring ever passed without its threat of danger.

Thus, with the development of methods of transportation that now seem rude the remoteness of the prairie began to disappear long before it was actually dissipated by the railroad. In this region both elevation and frigidity were enemies that made impossible as an agency of exchange the canal — from which, at such great cost, much had been hoped earlier. It is now difficult to understand how effective and how cheap wagon carriage could be made over the roads already described, but men would take any chance to conquer the waste and to find adventure when as the result of their efforts they could build up homes of their own and at the same time feel that they were fulfilling their country's destiny by extending its boundaries and its blessings.

Behind it all was a courage which, even if it sometimes seems like bravado, is only known at its best estate in the Pioneer and, as nothing weighed upon him like idle time, so nothing tempted him as did the taking of chances. As he had left the inhabited world, he was determined not only that it should not be well lost but that it should be so moved upon that he might look forward to having it always with him, wherever he might go. The only way

## Pioneer Foundations

to overcome isolation, was to remove it. Colonization and settlement have through all time been dependent upon the progressive improvement of transportation; a fact nowhere better illustrated than in the spread of American men and American life.

### *WHY THE PIONEER DREADED THE PRAIRIE*

WHEN the Pioneer emerged from the forest he had become the most expert woodman hitherto known to history. He not only knew everything now known about the handling of timber — except so far as it is related to improvements in mechanism devised by him — but he had the knowledge now distributed over many trades and subdivisions of trades; he knew what to do with the rough products that came out of logs. He could not only handle these with skill and efficiency, however heavy and massive, but could build his own houses, barns, fences, and sleds, make his own axe-handles, whip stocks, and broom handles, fashion toys for his children, and turn out practically everything useful that could be made from wood. These things were not done as a makeshift, something that would serve the purpose in a rough, crude way until some expert came along. The Pioneer could bring to them a degree of skill and finish that would have done credit to a Nuremberg toy-maker. It was not called art, because the cant of this word had not come into use, but it was, nevertheless, the application of graceful lines and finish to articles in common use.

It has already been explained why hesitation long marked

## Why the Pioneer Dreaded the Prairie

the Pioneer's acceptance of the prairie; but when he saw that he had come into the enjoyment of something new, the effect was akin to that presented by an army which long penned up in trenches or behind fortifications suddenly finds itself fighting in the open. There was all at once a change in the game of settlement and in many of its rules. The methods of cultivation, the freedom from animate enemies, either human or brute, and the fact that as an individual he could go where he might choose without scout or companion marked the escape from a grinding tyranny that had stood between him and independence.

A new sense of beauty was also opened when, without danger or fear but with the keenest pleasure, he could walk, drive, or ride, over an open prairie where civilized man had never before set foot. Few sights could be more inspiring than for the curious and venturesome traveler to have his new home on the edge of the woods to which he clung so long, and to go off, say in the early spring when the grass was pushing up timidly or in the late summer when it had become breast high to himself or his horse, and thus to have the novel sensation of seeing what seemed to his imagination the whole earth spread out before him. Here, with not a tree or shrub in sight, unknown miles from human habitation, with nothing but the illimitable expanse about him, such a view could but make its solemn appeal to the hermit character which he had inherited and cultivated.

It is not surprising that he was struck with wonder and awe, or that he hesitated on the verge of something so strange as to lie beyond his understanding. Fortunately,

## Pioneer Foundations

he came to it by easy steps. His strength had not lost its power nor his hand its cunning. He was still the great woodman and there was opportunity in his new environment to use his art—for constructive purposes, not for destruction. He no longer slew trees as if he were conducting some great battue: he became thoughtful, prudent, and careful lest in the face of this new opportunity he might fail to appreciate the blessing that had come to him and his kind. He would so use this meagre supply of timber as to command at once a proper reward for himself and render the world a real service. These thin fringes of woods along the streams had a mission: far beyond their own limits back on these plains were to be houses, fences, and fuel for settlers who for years to come were to know the new conditions that had surrounded men.

### *HOW THE SETTLER HANDLED TIMBER*

THE settler along the streams no longer thought of clearing a farm for himself by barking, cutting, or burning trees; instead he began to employ all his skill in woodcraft and to utilize every machine whether it was old or so new that it had been hurriedly designed to meet some particular emergency. Soon the bottom portion of his land became a source of revenue. He was then the farmer, pure and simple, and this occupied him during the season of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and garnering. With the cold weather, he became again the woodman. He felled his timber, drew it to the sawmill (which, by this time was only less common than the blacksmith shop) either sold it



## How the Settler Handled Timber

outright, or had it sawed by his own aid on shares, or for money payment, and had the product ready for an addition to his house, or for a frame building to replace the outgrown log one, for his own fencing, or for sale to his neighbors, near or remote. Often in the scarcity of ready money, he could only exchange his product for labor which had a double value because otherwise his progress towards independence would have been retarded.

These river bottoms were covered with a virgin forest, such as had never before been seen by the white man. The principal varieties were black walnut — perhaps the most useful tree known to Pioneer American experience. Growing tall and straight, often from four to six feet at the butt without a limb for fifty feet, a hard wood and therefore durable, but easy to saw and split, yielding a nut much esteemed, and, before a sawmill was available, lending itself to handling with maul, wedge, and gluts, and thus available for furniture, rails, shingles, chinking, almost any purpose to which a straight-grained wood might be used. A forest in which walnut trees predominated in all sizes was a sight worth seeing.

Then the sycamore, growing nearer the stream, often five feet in diameter, generally tall and straight, its wood almost as hard as iron, unsplitable, but sawing easily into fencing or building material, was most useful because of its quality and of its large yield for a comparatively small amount of labor. Its size as well as its proximity to the stream often made it difficult to handle, especially when it was embraced from root to top by a giant grapevine

## Pioneer Foundations

often four or five inches through at the root. The elm in many varieties, red, white, and water, grew in great profusion and the use of each was as familiar to the woodman as the members of his own family.

The white hickory, perhaps on the whole the most widely distributed tree known to the West, would work into anything from a coarse fence rail to the most delicate and flexible ramrod, whip-handle, or axe-helve. It was so plentiful, at an early day, that much of it was burned for firewood. Its ashes were much esteemed because it was not then thought possible that the remnant left from any other wood could supply the lye for making hominy or soap; so they were saved with great care throughout the winter against the busy spring days when the ingenious housewife should want lye. Indeed, it constituted the only product of its kind that had a money value.

The hackberry, though a comparatively small tree, was much esteemed for its ease of splitting. It worked readily into rails, and even into studding and rafters in an emergency. It had in it so small an amount of sap that it was often used for starting fires quickly. It burned with great noise and crackle, and was liberal in the emission of sparks. The horse chestnut — universally known in America in early days as the buckeye — which has given a great State its familiar name, is naturally the most useless wood that ever grew. Full of water and therefore soggy, useless to saw and impossible to split. Its fruit or nut was poisonous to cattle. It grew rapidly to a great size and altogether was next door to a nuisance. But as the Pioneer knew how

## A Man Both Woodman and Farmer

to dispose of it he burnt it each winter, while it lasted, as the great backlog in his fireplace.

The oaks were not often found in the bottom woods, but grew on those bluffs which were wooded. Early travelers pronounced the white oak the most widely distributed of our native trees and the most used. It was available for almost any purpose from barrels to plough beams, from rails to house sills, and fully justified its age-long reputation for strength, endurance, and ease of working. It was never over plentiful in Iowa where most of the timber grew on bottom lands. The red and some other oaks grew in the Iowa country, though not in profusion.

The white walnut, better known as the butternut, was small and never plentiful. Its nut was highly prized for its food and oil values, and its bark made a coarse dye. The shellbark hickory and the sugar maple were found in small quantities behind the bluffs along the streams.

### A MAN BOTH WOODMAN AND FARMER

THESE were the principal varieties, not so large in number as in the purely wooded parts of the country but well fitted for human use in a prairie region. It was upon these that the American woodman exercised his strength and skill when he found himself in surroundings where handling timber was an industry and not merely a destructive orgy. An early Iowa farm thus divided into meadow and woodland became a factory of double capacity for food and for articles in wood. Its owner was both a worker and a merchant with a market for something that had formerly

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been without commercial or moral value and he brought to bear a large measure of skill both as artisan and trader. He had the best facilities of his time for handling his secondary product and the help of men thoroughly trained in their art.

The woodman's ingenuity could only be appreciated when his skill in cutting great trees, in handling the logs with the oxen or horses which he had trained into a large intelligence, in eking out his chains or ropes when in loading great logs he would bring the wild grapevine into service to reach those remote from the wood roads, in the manipulation of skids, wagons, or sleds, in the use of crowbars, cant hooks, and all the devices of timber handling, he showed as much courage and almost as much knowledge as if he had been in command of an army.

The making of rails, generally supposed to be a simple process, was far otherwise. The felling of the tree in a most favorable spot for the use of the cross-cut saw, the driving of wedges for starting the work of splitting, the making and the use of gluts and mauls, the knowledge of how to handle a given cut in order to get just the size and shape of rail wanted, the calculation by eye rather than mathematics of the number of rails that could be expected, all these were operations in which the modern mechanical workman would be lost.

Gluts were large wooden wedges of white hickory, generally made during the winter, polished like unto ivory and when thoroughly seasoned were almost as hard as iron. The largest would have heavy iron bands fitted around

## A Man Both Woodman and Farmer

the head, to preserve them from splitting. They followed the iron wedges at intervals over the ten-foot lengths of the log, and, by their aid, even the longest tree would be cloven into halves with comparative ease. The maul used for driving these and the iron wedges was made from great knots generally cut from the sycamore, when available, first roughly shaped and put into turning lathes when possible, and, if not, hewed out by the axe and the adze. A strong handle was then inserted for use by one man. Both of these improvised tools required strength and skillful work as well as much foresight in providing them against the time of need. Iron sledges were almost unknown in rail-making operations.

It was no wonder that the rail-splitting experiences of Lincoln appealed to the West where every man and boy knew what they meant, or that they should have excited mirth or ridicule in the East and in Europe. He had no unusual gift: he merely did his part in the life which surrounded him. Even the cutting of cordwood, though only into four foot lengths, demanded an art and an experience the absence of which would soon impress themselves both upon the spectator and the worker. In the making of pickets, palings, or fence-posts everywhere, indeed, the wonderful training of the American axeman was both apparent and necessary.

And yet, this man was essentially a farmer, fixing his home in the wilderness, helping to make the houses of a people, designing, making, and repairing the roads, building the schoolhouses and employing the teachers, in due time

## Pioneer Foundations

organizing the churches, leading the prayer meeting, sometimes preaching the sermon, and very often exhorting in a revival meeting. With such foundations there is hardly any reason to ask why this is a country of independence, of ingenuity and character, of mechanical skill, and of great industrial achievement in every line of human endeavor.

The only cause for wonder lies in the fact that some persons have an idea that it began only after the Civil War, and that others should think their country was never a world power until after a certain naval skirmish in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. It is constantly forgotten that the history of America lies imbedded in the mind, in the work, and in the achievements of the American yeoman. He had no help from the top because there was nothing above him. All the forces in religion, education, economic development, politics, and government came from him alone. Franklin, Washington, Marshall, and Jefferson, and the creative figures of our earlier life derive from him but he was earlier than all of them, above all of them, and inclusive of all of them. He is America personified; and every attempt to get away from him is doomed to be a failure and every partial or temporary effort to do so is an ever present danger, a deadly peril.

6

THE GROWING OF GRAIN





## A SOCIETY WITH ONLY ONE REAL TRADE

THE life here dealt with, is that of the Pioneer farmer of the period. It is the industries then current that I am trying to explain and to show how they were either fundamentally the same or different from those of the present. In reality there was only one and that was farming. However much anything else bore the semblance of a separate trade, it still had no place of its own; it was merely a handmaid of agriculture whose various purposes it served : an incident to the tilling of the soil.

If the farmer could not get away from the smithy, the carpentry, the wagon-maker, the gristmill, or the sawmill, so the mechanic who had learned these and cognate trades could not move a step until settlers had gone ahead in sufficient numbers to employ the supplementary gifts. It is true that artisans were, in their secondary capacity, also farmers who took up lands for themselves in order to be on the ground and bide their time while waiting for customers. No kind of a factory, even the simplest, preceded population and waited for the chance to sell its product; even the professional man — the doctor, the lawyer, the clergyman — was often, perforce, a farmer until the necessary patients, clients, or congregations could gather about him. In many cases if the outlook for the temporary calling proved better than for the permanent one the latter would be abandoned.

## Pioneer Foundations

Of the other great human industries there could be no commerce, even under the loosest construction of the word, and no fisheries or mining while transportation, little more than medieval in its development, was the incident of agriculture. It was thus, speaking collectively, a one-trade community which divided itself roughly into two branches: the growing of grain, and the raising of livestock — always so interlaced that it was impossible to tell where one began and the other ended. In this development whatever any man did or attempted circled about these two branches of an occupation that afforded work for all. Life was little more complicated than in the pastoral age of the race, with the exception that authority was distributed over a much greater proportion of the population and that settled rules and laws had come into vogue.

Avoiding generalization, it is necessary to bear in mind the natural distinctions which I have noted as existing between men as they went together into a new physical environment remote from their fellows. It is impossible to jumble them up and to reach the conclusion that even within their own neighborhoods they were all the same, or had like characteristics in the same degree, or employed the same methods. Where to outward show all were starting anew, it would seem that with no other shelter than the blue sky and an unlimited area of land to subdue they must all in some occult way be equally poor or equally rich, living in a sort of unconscious communism that enabled them like a vast number of individuals who start in a race at the word of command to have fairly equal merit

and towards. Each knew his own at sight and each knew whether or not either himself or the other was incompetent or a dreamer.

The best class, whatever outward or seeming deprivation it had to pass through was always ambitious, was not really poor; the second class was aspiring but never quite certain what or where it was or how it would come, and the lowest was as hopeless as its remotest forerunners or its latest descendants, and although in a land where bodily necessities would almost certainly be found, somehow, could never either starve or reach any other condition than misery. The prosperous knew almost instinctively who, in the making of a new country, would coöperate on equal terms, who must be led, and who must be helped. As I am studying the process of making a State I shall have to deal mainly with the first. Whatever their number or proportion to the whole, these were the men who from nothing but rude physical strength and the bare stored material resources had to fashion a new society with effectiveness.

### THE ART OF CHOOSING A FARM

I SUPPOSE that the average age of the heads of families who went to Iowa from the year 1833 and onward until foundations were completed must have been about thirty. Most of them had not only already started in life as growing, promising families, but had achieved some measure of success. They had demonstrated what could be done in simple surroundings by industry and steadiness. They

## Pioneer Foundations

went into this remote Pioneer life for the many reasons that then entered into a removal from one part of a new country to another still newer. By 1850 the prairie had become a lure; it was no longer feared or suspected: proximity and use, as well as reputation, had made it familiar. It had become clear that energy and ability could command their reward in about half the time necessary under the heavy, rapidly forgotten despotism of the forest, so that the majority of the newcomers soon accumulated a momentum that meant continuance of initial success. With comparative ease this would carry them over many difficulties that had hampered their fathers on the older scenes.

If any figures could be compiled they would show that such men when destined to win a fair measure of success started by the purchase, often with some deferred payments, of about eighty acres of land of which something like one-third was timber and the remainder bottom land or on the ridge between two streams. It was the general rule that forty acres of this land would be broken and prepared for cultivation by the farmer himself. He had to wait some years for help from his boys — relying in the beginning almost wholly upon his own labor. In most cases from fifteen to twenty acres would be fenced in for hay or pasture. Of the cultivated forty acres, about thirty would be planted in corn leaving some ten acres for small grains including a tiny plot, perhaps a quarter or half an acre, for a garden in which the potato would occupy the most space. There was no allotment for fruit because it had not yet become acclimated or adapted to the soil and

## The Art of Choosing a Farm

for the further reason that wild crabapples, plums, cherries, blackberries, strawberries, and grapes grew in great profusion. For either pasture or hay there lay before him government land or that owned by the speculator with its rank growths going to waste.

By the time that the really enterprising man needed more land, his boys had come into adolescence and man's work (these were convertible terms) and the farmer was ready to spread out. Those who failed or became discouraged could sell on favorable terms so far as prices bore any relation to real values; so that the man who had successfully managed his eighty grew naturally and easily into a quarter-section, and that without incurring the heavy debt which both precept and example had taught the Pioneer to dread and avoid.

While passing into the prairie, invention had been so at work that the farmer's personal efficiency was doubled probably between 1840 and 1860, certainly by 1865. In due time also land and stock had acquired sufficient value to give the really efficient man a standing with the neighborhood banker who had so improved his position that he was no longer dependent upon a discredited currency and had become something other than a usurer or note-shaver.

The tendency to expand farms was neither speculative, leading into the morass of debt, nor was the ownership a thing of boast or show. It was a real and wholesome progress for the fit, with an accession of nature's tendency to eliminate the weak and unfit. This does not imply that all farming, or any large proportion of it, was high-class

## Pioneer Foundations

because this never became the case. It not only afforded an opportunity to the best to improve their methods, but made them exemplars for those prone to be careless or idle.

While this process was fairly under way, the younger generation was making itself felt. As a rule it stayed at home later than had been the custom, and the labor of all began so to count that that family position which in the Pioneer life inspired a real pride became fixed. There was hard work for the first and second generation (neither yet in middle life and all still able to do it) and, when this was over, markets had come, railroads were on the way, the character of the State and its industry had become fixed, the prairie had justified itself, and Iowa had taken another step in its making.

### THE GROWING OF CORN

As I am not writing a disquisition on agriculture it does not fall within my province to describe at length the Pioneer processes of cultivating the soil, but some reference to the methods employed, the precedents followed, and the results obtained may be necessary.

As a rule the mover who reached his destination late in the winter or early in the spring carried with him the best seed corn from his old neighborhood. This had been chosen with care, the sprouting and reproductive qualities of each ear being tested by primitive but infallible methods. This system was less applicable to wheat, rye, and oats because of the great bulk required to sow even the smallest

## The Growing of Corn

field. Everywhere on American soil, maize (which would not have been known by any other name than corn) was a constant quantity. Originally it was only a single variety whether planted in the stony fields of New England, in the fertile bottoms of Virginia, Maryland, or Pennsylvania rivers where the Eden gardens of our early agriculture were found. It was planted by the Pioneer, as to-day, with the same number of grains to the hill, skillfully scattered, in the one case or the other, the same four feet of distance each way between the rows, as both had been practiced by the American Indian whenever he had tilled the soil. In both cases, in the same seedplots, or sometimes between them in the row, were planted peas and beans, and after cultivation was completed pumpkins were grown. It is doubtful whether the maximum yield of corn has ever been greater under the white man, with all his boasted superiority, than with the Indian on the James and the Chickahominy, nor has careful cultivation and the resulting garden-like absence of noxious weeds been more in evidence than in the few but immense Indian fields upon which Captain John Smith looked early in the seventeenth century.\*

The wise mover generally sought his new home late in the summer or early in the fall after he had raised a crop in his last stopping place. He could harvest and sell his wheat, oats, rye, barley, and all cereals (except corn, which

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\* Students interested in the details of corn-growing in this earliest period will find the subject briefly but amply treated in Bruce's *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 150 et seq.

## Pioneer Foundations

was, by assumption, the big grain) universally known as small grains not only to distinguish them but to show their place in the economy of agriculture, then sell his surplus livestock, dispose of his standing corn, pay his debts and leave for his new home, a hundred or five hundred miles away, in the beautiful weather of September or October when the roads, even over the prairie, were almost perfect. Arrived at his destination he would find temporary shelter somewhere — generally with friends or relatives — and at once begin work for the winter in the woods getting together material for his own house or for others.

By spring he was ready for any fate. His garden would be a help through the summer, as he would generally rent and cultivate enough land which with his crop of sod corn would carry him through the autumn and winter. The next spring his land would be planted to corn, or sowed with small grains, and by the end of his second complete year he was settled with all the pride that his position, or inherited yeoman qualities, could generate. He was then on the way to independence without an obligation to anybody except his own labor and that of his family, as ready for public enterprise as for helping his neighbors.

### TOOLS FOR GROWING CORN

CORN was still the staple. Fall wheat, by reason of its distribution of labor throughout most of the year, had been a great economizer in the wooded States to the east, would seldom stand the cold or adapt itself to the soil, and so did not become a success until the humors were worked



## Tools for Growing Corn

out of the over-rich soil. So fertile was the land, so quickly did the prairie respond to the labor of the husbandman that in many cases (indeed in most) only three or four years were required to carry a new county from nothing to comparative comfort, even wealth.

From a meagre tax list with a necessary regard for public economy came as by magic the ability to improve roads, build bridges, schoolhouses, courthouses, and expand religious and other social mediums. Nominally these material advances were made as the result of many cereal crops and a variety of industries : in reality throughout the area now known as the Middle West they were based upon the corn crop. As all trades were the incidents of agriculture, so other products were subsidiary to it. From the eastern borders of Ohio to and including Missouri and Iowa corn was the sure foundation of industry and prosperity. In all its ramifications it furnished the means for developing and making a new country. Remoteness from market accounted in some measure, for this dominance, though the intervening years have not produced much change in the relative importance of crops.

It was natural that, while devices for cutting grain and grass were developed with great rapidity, it was the production of corn that was most important and vital. It was in machines for breaking the original sod, for better and deeper ploughing, for planting and cultivating, that the changes were most rapid and demanded the greatest effort and ingenuity. That this process promoted the production of small grains, had much to do with the invention of har-

## Pioneer Foundations

vesting devices which have thus far not been very practical in application to corn so that the improvement of the plough only prepared the way by better tillage for increased production all round. The plough emerged from the forest, primitive in development; by the middle of the sixth decade of the century it had been so improved in shape, strength, and adaptability to these soils which were free from stone or roots and so efficient in performing its proper functions that developments since have been mere details.

The most serious difficulty the settler had to overcome after reaching the prairie was to procure a plough that would scour. This was not important so long as this implement worked among stones or stumps, but when a continuous furrow had to be turned in the heavy, black, soft loam of the prairie, it required a long time to overcome this drawback. The bottom lands east of the Wabash had not promoted the production of a steel that would insure certainty, because enough sandy soil was found there to remove the need for serious changes. Under the new conditions the plough, in order to be a success, must scour whenever it entered the ground. In order to produce this the farmer, the steel-maker, and the blacksmith coöperated with a persistence and patience perhaps never before bestowed upon any product in all the armory of tools. It was probably the middle year of the Civil War (1863) before such success was achieved.\*

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\* When the great plains of Middle and Western Texas came forward for subduing, still another struggle was entered upon to perfect a plough that would scour in the stiff, mucky, almost waxen soil found there.

## Development of Machines

It was not until this victory over a refractory soil had been achieved that the ploughing-match at the county fair, generally between classes of boys of like age, origin, and training became an important feature. Straightness and depth of furrow, neatness in turning corners, the appearance of the "land" (this being the technical term for a given stint or portion of a field) were all taken into account, as was the handling of the team. Few features were of more real interest or value than these matches and they long retained a place at fairs and exhibitions.

### *DEVELOPMENT OF MACHINES*

THE horse corn planter of the end of this period had been improved, but not modified in principle. It was lighter, better looking, cheaper, but not changed for its fundamental purposes as a medium for doing quickly and accurately what the Indian and his white successors had done for two centuries and more, slowly, awkwardly, and with difficulty by hand. Once the two-horse cultivator was made, its principles were established; here, too, the rest has been improvement in detail. Other than a sheller, no man had produced a successful automatic machine for harvesting corn, whether in the form of a husker or a cutter and shocker. Corn growing, therefore, remained after the crop had been laid by a hand industry with enormous waste products in the bulky stalk and cobs. And yet, it is, as it was in the earliest days in our economic history, the one grain upon which large areas must depend for maintenance and development. Unfortunately it has, to some extent,

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lost its importance as a human food, but it enters into so many things that are eaten that it maintains its dominion almost to the verge of monopoly.

Corn has taken the place held in the agriculture of the old world by roots, and the waste or by-products of other grains, in the making of milk, butter, cheese, and meats of all kinds, so that with the exception of hay it performs alone the function of the great variety of products elsewhere used for these purposes. History does not furnish an example of a people scattered over such wide areas, so nearly dependent upon one product growing out of the soil as those of the Middle West have been upon this plant, unknown until the discovery of the new world.

It was to the growing of corn that the Pioneer had mainly to devote himself, and he soon carried on this trade in all its branches with a proficiency that for the time was surprising. Working on a small scale, without help from government, or anybody else, he learned the secrets of his trade, not in a laboratory but for himself. It has become impossible fully to understand the many farm theories, propounded with the confusion of authority; but before the formal application of science to agriculture, these early men not only knew the soils they worked in, what fertilizers were needed and how to treat and apply them, and how products must be grown in rotation, but they had a practical knowledge of the nutritive value of the corn which fed to animals would yield the best and quickest results. The experiments were unrecorded but they were practical and news of them was spread about and shared with all.

## Effort More Than Economic

The few best farmers in a given county (seldom more than one or two to a township) soon became the exponents of these ideas and the improved methods based upon them. They early formed county agricultural societies, whose annual fairs became features in the social and economic life of the day. Such men were never content with what they themselves had tried to do. Drawn from many geographical origins, they kept in touch with the progress made in their old homes. They were little given to writing, or lecturing; but useful information was so passed on from one individual to another that the best that could be known was probably distributed almost as effectively as now.

### EFFORT MORE THAN ECONOMIC

THERE was such a strong desire to coöperate with all honest effort that the greatest pains were taken to be helpful. As I have already insisted, it was more than an economic system that was under development; it was free, republican institutions, and these were so closely related to every individual, he was encouraged to make himself worthy of his great privilege.

It is almost impossible to understand how closely every industry, every development in education, every social improvement, was connected with the fundamental institutions and ideas of government which curiously enough were thought to be still on trial. Everywhere talk was heard about the great experiment, the importance of making no mistakes, or of doing nothing that would betray to the watching monarchical peoples of Europe (from whose ideas

## Pioneer Foundations

of government it was supposed that we had emancipated ourselves) the slightest suggestion of failure. These could only be avoided by constant watchfulness even more in government and political methods than in industry and social systems. Every man was constantly admonished that success depended upon him; if danger was finally averted, he and his family might aspire to anything within the world's gift. Responsibility was not limited to what each might make of himself; but, by a curious process of reasoning, it was impressed upon him that he was an Atlas upon whose shoulders, potentially, the weight of the world might rest. Seen now, in time's long perspective, there is something of the grotesque in this idea : then it was serious, an ever present reality which contributed in a high degree to make and keep life hopeful. It may have been a delusion so far as individuals were concerned; but, if so, it was a dear and powerful one.

### THE GROWING OF SMALL GRAIN

CO-OPERATION was not a cant word, something to be talked about : people both meant what they said and did it. The newcomer was tested by the help afforded him. If he deserved it, there was no withdrawal; no begrudging in offering or giving; he might have seed, tools, and assistance until he could get on his feet; if he was inappreciative, or worse if he was idle or useless, he and his family were soon dropped, and there was the end of him as he would probably soon become a mover-on or a mover-back.

This helpfulness to others has gone deep down into

## The Growing of Small Grain

American life, and it is only when its loss is threatened that its value to society is recognized. It was not an incident of big business about which so much is now heard; but it was the one quality which made possible every kind of business, big and little. The old custom of the new-comer in borrowing seed to plant his first crop with the promise to pay back at a given rate after harvest, had come down without interruption from the earliest settlements. It saved the settler the trouble of carrying such supplies with him and he was able to procure those which were adjusted to his new environment. Under these conditions, dealing with a soil of such surpassing fertility, the increase in the production of grain outran the growth of population and the demand or market necessary to give them a value, judged by modern prices, fairly commensurate with the labor of producing them.

This concurrence of conditions, then thought favorable, long confined the western farmer to a standard of success which was much lower, from a money point of view, than that of the artisan who was so distinctly the beneficiary both of the increase in population and the favoring artificial fiscal legislation of the time. It gradually drew away from their historic industry a considerable proportion of the most active and intelligent of the young yeomanry and drove them prematurely into the cities. This production of grain — beyond what could find a market at a price competitive with other forms of industry — has had a permanent influence upon American life, one from which it is to be feared that small agriculture will never again so recover

## Pioneer Foundations

as to attract the type of men who, for nearly three centuries, made it what it was, and with it made their country and its institutions.

No effort of the Pioneer farmer to make small grains productive to the fairly full capacity of the soil was quite generally successful. It was not essentially a wheat-growing country compared with Ohio and Indiana or with the newer regions in Minnesota and the Dakotas, whose existence was then known but whose development was deferred, so that the industry became a by-product mainly for home supply. Its yield was meagre and uncertain compared with the older Pioneer States, and a long time passed before the quality settled down into something resembling uniformity.

The early miller could not discriminate closely as to grades of wheat received from patrons : much of the flour made from the good grain that went into his hopper was ruined by the smaller proportion of the bad and that poorly threshed from wet and ill-harvested straw. It was not until the railroad came to carry away the surplus to meet the demands of a distant competitive market that grain was so graded that reliance could be placed upon it. By this time large production had begun elsewhere, and Iowa as well as the older Middle West had ceased to be a wheat supply for outside markets.

Oats were mostly consumed in the farmer's own stables or sold to neighbors; the yield seldom reached the best results because the fertility of the soil promoted a rank, lush growth with a straw that tended to go down under the



## The Annual Threshing

last windstorm before ripening. There was little demand for rye, then used almost wholly in distilleries; with the cheap production of high wines from corn and their employment in industries, there was little encouragement for its culture. In a different way the same is true of barley which never became an important crop. All changes only confirmed corn in a monopoly which it was fated to maintain against all comers. Even to-day when the products of Iowa are displayed in competition with other States or the world it is corn, and the livestock made from it, that are in mind.

### THE ANNUAL THRESHING

PERHAPS nothing better illustrated the actual working of a coöperation that was almost unconscious than did the threshing machine which since its invention in Scotland had been improved year by year. No farmer in any given township would have enough grain to warrant his individual ownership of such a machine; so two or often three active and experienced men, generally handy mechanics, often blacksmiths, would purchase one and then start out, just after the small grain harvest, to canvass the neighborhood for threshing. This done, they would make their plans, so fixing their route that they would double on their tracks as little as possible. Each of these men would have a pair of good horses, well trained for the duty of furnishing their share of the power which required for its proper generation either eight or ten horses, the balance being furnished by the customer and his neighbors. Everybody was ex-

## Pioneer Foundations

pected to be on hand as nearly about sun-up (sunrise was a practically unknown word) as possible. The owner with all his hands was there, and he had drawn the remainder of the necessary labor from his nearest or most efficient neighbors. The assignment of crew, probably numbering ten or twelve was made with as close reference as possible to the known fitness or training for this particular work.

One of the owners of the machine drove the horses from the always turning, circular platform, this being perhaps the most risky and difficult part of the work. The other owner was known as the feeder, his task requiring an almost equivalent amount of skill. Alongside of him was the band-cutter who was generally a nimble, well-trained nearly full-grown boy. He had to have a steady hand and study the feeder's moods and methods in order to keep a regular supply of sheaves properly spread upon the apron. The pitchers from the stack, or from a wagon (when grain came in from the small farmers who had not a sufficient product to warrant them in hiring the machine) were also important links in the chain, while the straw-stackers had the dirtiest job of all. Once under way, the machine would probably not stop for more than a few minutes until the noon hour came.

The threshers' dinner made one of the hard days of the year for the housewife and her help, which was drawn mainly from neighbor women who thus did their part in the coöperative process. There was a real rivalry between the housewives of a neighborhood in the matter of furnishing the best dinner for a dozen men famished by their long

## Gradual Growth of Domestic Grasses

turns at work and always looking forward, ready afterwards to award the palm of merit to the cook who was thought to be the best. As a rule, the work was laid out for completion within the day, after which the threshers would imitate the old-fashioned circus, pull up stakes, and move on in the darkness to the next task.

This was strenuous work that tried men both in strength, willingness, and character. Every workman had his stint; if he failed, the whole crew was stopped, something that seldom happened because each man was really working for himself. Often a set of farmers would thus work together for ten days or a fortnight, or until every stack in the neighborhood had been threshed and the grain garnered or marketed so that the owners could go into the next township when another set of workers would be taken on and this would go on until their season was over. With fairly good crops, the threshermen's job was lucrative and nearly always as agreeable as such hard labor could be made.

### GRADUAL GROWTH OF DOMESTIC GRASSES

THE cultivation of the tame grasses did not enter into account with the earliest settlers. Other than the tracts with growing timber there was no land that was not covered with a fine quality of wild grass equally well adapted for hay or pasture. In the main it was a variety known by its popular name of bluestem. It sprouted later than did the domestic grasses common in the timbered regions from which, either directly or remotely, most of the Pioneers

## Pioneer Foundations

had come; but it pushed forward with great force. With these earliest settlers, except for the growths on the river bottoms, cultivated grasses for pasture and hay had been necessities; there was nothing else. By gradual change from one area or district to another, these had become thoroughly adapted to all kinds of soil, so that to those familiar with nothing else they seemed indigenous products. Happily, the transition to the prairie was gradual, so that at each advance there was time so to modify grains and grasses as to adapt them to a new environment in climate and soil.

With this wealth of natural growth, it was only necessary for the earliest settlers to take a scythe and enter upon land next to their own farms (this tool was soon superseded by the mower) often within the same section, sometimes within the same quarter section, and cut, cure, and stack as much hay as they needed for stock and sheds. As settlement extended, it became necessary to go farther afield until in course of time a distance of ten miles was not unusual. While the government land remained, it was common for the haymaker to mow a swath around such tracts as he might select. This was notice to all comers that he claimed the grass within the plot thus marked, and by common consent something which in the politics in business of today would be known as a gentleman's agreement, none would interfere with him.

Even in this the spirit of coöperation was so strong that the settlers in a given neighborhood would work in common on land chosen by all, each in succession; but, in spite of this spirit of helpfulness so strong was the spirit of in-

## Gradual Growth of Domestic Grasses

dependence that the claims would be individual. When the settlement of a given district was nearly complete, enterprising farmers purchased the right to cut the grass thus growing wild upon land belonging to an absentee holder. Generally, the return would be about sufficient to pay taxes thus enabling the owner to command the net increment due to increase in taxable value. In favored spots this wild grass would turn two to two-and-a-half tons to the acre, in rare cases three tons, but the average on good land was probably around one ton.

With the growing of cultivated or tame grasses for hay or pasture, small experiments by far-seeing farmers had generally revealed varieties which were fairly, though seldom perfectly, adapted to the soil. Blue grass did not fit into the new environment of soil and climate, so that attempts to naturalize it were abandoned for a time. The same was true, in large measure, of red top — the desire in all cases being to obtain a product that would be equally useful for hay or grazing. Clover was one of the most difficult of the accepted grasses to acclimate. The severity of the winters, the violent upheaval from the spring frosts, the elevation, and the peculiar richness of the soil, all increased the difficulties. This was a great disappointment, especially to farmers from Ohio and Indiana where clover had become an important adjunct in the raising of swine, which in Iowa (as everywhere within the area of the great basin lying between the great enclosing mountain ranges) was the most profitable of the industries. It took, probably, an average of thirty years after original settlement, within

## Pioneer Foundations

any selected area, to overcome this drawback with a success which hardly equalled that in the named districts.

With timothy there was little delay. It soon adapted itself to the soil, and as the cattle branch of the livestock industry increased with perhaps disproportionate rapidity within the period under consideration it had thoroughly established itself as the standard grass for both hay and pasture. During this time alfalfa, although one of the oldest of cultivated grasses, was an unheard-of product.

The prodigality of production promoted a great deal of waste in hay. The best farmer was as careful as if he had been forced to grow this spontaneous supply; but the careless or indifferent cut it in a slovenly way, used it for bedding cattle and horses, let it rot after cutting, or even in the windrow, the shock, or the stack. It was his inevitable way — he only did after his kind. He never learned until the native supply had disappeared. Literally he illustrated the old saw that the water is never missed until the well goes dry, and then when he discovered his plight he moved on to repeat to the end of his days his experiment in waste.

### MISCELLANEOUS OR TEMPORARY PRODUCTS

I HAVE dealt somewhat fully with the staple products : corn and the small grains which together were the dependence of the mass of the population. The majority, like the majority everywhere, were content to grow these without reference to the sidelines or by-products of farming; but there was a small minority : inquiring, ingenious, prudent

## Miscellaneous or Temporary Products

enough so to vary industry that they could supply themselves with many needed articles and then have a surplus for sale to neighbors, or in the small open market which, even under the most restricted conditions, always exists wherever human beings are collected.

In the earliest days a sufficient supply of hops grew wild, but some attention was given to flax. Even the cultivation of silk worms had attracted some attention, appearing as an item in the Federal Census report of 1850; but this, along with many others, practically disappeared in the marvellous industrial growth of the State and its neighbors during the succeeding ten years. There remained little room for the distinctly experimental.

Even such a product as broom corn which, after a time fairly adjusted itself to a prairie environment, was grown only by a few farmers, and these, as already described, were limited to the best and most enterprising. With an ingenuity that enabled them to do anything so long as other people had done it and it was practical enough to return even a small profit, they turned themselves into broom-makers, working up their product from a small garden spot during odd times in the winter. They turned the sticks from the linden found in their woods and thus were able to add something more to the little store of ready money necessary for taxes, or for exchange at the country store, or often to barter in part payment for work by less enterprising neighbors. This was an advance from the primitive rudeness of the broom made from split hickory or from the brush of the hazel and other short, compact bushes, so

## Pioneer Foundations

that the real broom, long a luxury in many houses, was gradually restored in an improved form to its place in domestic economy.

### TOBACCO NEVER REALLY NATURALIZED

ALONG the westward path of the Pioneer from Virginia to the Missouri, however unfriendly the soil or climate, there was always a sprinkling of tobacco. North of the Ohio River its quality was bad, but the plant was attractive to look upon while reminding many persons of early homes far away. It had almost disappeared before the Civil War. About 1863 the plug tobacco, almost universally in use by men for chewing, and by an occasional woman for smoking, became costly and almost unobtainable owing to scarcity and the closing of the supply. It was then that, in the northern part of the Middle West, a general revival of the growing of the plant became apparent. In the absence of knowledge of how to handle it, it was turned into a sort of rude, hard twist for chewing, and under another process the leaves were so dried and broken up that they became a substitute for use in a pipe.

As the cigar was practically unknown, no attempt was made so to utilize it; otherwise, the inherent vileness of the Pittsburgh stoga, or the Bavarian so-called cigar which suggests cabbage as its basic material, might easily have inflicted upon the world another and, possibly, a worse imitation of the distinctive products of Cuba and Virginia. When the market was again open so that old-time tastes could be indulged, the cultivation of tobacco was gradually



## Growing of Sorghum

abandoned and it passed into the limbo of lost industries. If, as is common wherever real tobacco is grown, there was ever found in the West even a small area in which a high order of product was possible, I was never so fortunate as to hear of it.

### GROWING OF SORGHUM

Just before the war the growing of sorghum, which previously had been little more than a fancy garden plant, also became quite general. The scarcity and the consequent high price of all sweetening made necessary some substitute. In those days the use of molasses was almost universal, and certain brands known as "New Orleans syrup" and "golden syrup" seemed almost prime necessities of family life. In spite of the bulk of these articles they were widely distributed, and substituted in cooking were often esteemed in the crude refining processes of the day above the more expensive products in the form of sugar. So, the cane of sorghum which in the rich soil of the prairie grew to a great size and height was generally cultivated.

It would have seemed impossible for such a substitute to make its way so quickly, but Mother Necessity soon forced the cultivation of the plant and the manufacture of its juice into a coarse syrup that found acceptance during its short life. The rollers for crushing the hard stalks were often made of wood, generally of sycamore, and at home; but even within the few years of its vogue there was developed a supply of machinery in the form of crushers and boilers that gave a show of success to an emergency

## Pioneer Foundations

industry. But the bagasse, produced from the huge stalk, was so overwhelming in quantity and so useless that no practical method of disposing of it was ever devised.

With the return of normal conditions and the restoration of the economic law under which a given industry is fairly limited to its own environment, sorghum practically disappeared from the northern scene. It was not long until new processes improved the quality and reduced the cost of refined sugar. This was accompanied by a change of taste, which substituted fruit products for cane syrups as an article of food; but, on the whole, nothing could have been more fortunate or opportune than the experiment begun, continued, and ended within a single ten-year period. It had served its purpose of carrying a people through a crisis.

### *DEVELOPMENT DUE TO ECLECTIC ORIGIN OF SETTLERS*

THESE rapid changes were made possible by the fact that the people were drawn from so many sources. This gave them a knowledge of a great variety of economic plants. There was always a sufficient number from the older parts of the country to preserve, for their own distinctive products, a memory that could not be entirely overlaid by the narrower habits of the majority who had been drawn from the secondary settlements west of Virginia and Pennsylvania. These contending customs had a potent influence upon remote regions, so peopled as to encourage experiments with all products which could possibly have a chance

## Improvements in Tools

for life in their novel surroundings. Most of these new plants failed and threw the innovators back upon staples, but in many cases persistence in trial, intelligence in seeking favorable soil and the sheltered nook, had their reward so that by the year 1870 a generation after the formal organization of the area into a Territory saw in successful cultivation a variety that was surprising of plants fit for food considering the short time and the difficulties.

The same conclusions apply to flowers. Almost every family had brought with it seeds of plants to which it had been accustomed. Here again, natural selection had to do its work until within a few years every well-to-do housewife of taste had surrounded herself with her special favorites and those of her neighbors who, in all probability, had been drawn from sources remote from her own, with an ornamental flora well adapted to its new surroundings. The early gardens benefitted by this process, as each plant was closely studied from a practical point of view and was dovetailed with a remarkable degree of taste into its own place in the economy of the old-fashioned garden.

### IMPROVEMENTS IN TOOLS

I HAVE mentioned the gradual, steady improvement in the implements and tools used in agriculture as the settler approached the prairie. Many of these were due to changes in taste, recognition of the fact that size or weight had small relation to usefulness, and that a light, well-appearing article might at the same time permit its user to do more effective work; but the principal motive, often unconscious,

## Pioneer Foundations

back of these improvements was the necessity for helping to feed, clothe, and shelter millions of human beings of whom the distant settler in the western wilderness or on the prairie could never know anything. He toiled on in silence and in personal ignorance, while great unseen movements were so operating that economic revolution was under way.

The methods that produced the great changes, the application of machines to farming, had their origin in the character of the American farmer himself. From the beginning these have been the outgrowth of his independent and enterprising traits : his contribution to progress. The love of novelty, amounting almost to a passion — sometimes approaching the danger point where change might seem to be sought for its own sake — the like passion for work and the resulting desire to do more and more of it, and the other almost unsuspected ambition to contribute to the conquest of a continent, developed an almost abnormal ingenuity.

American inventions in farm devices have not been the work of some series of high outstanding geniuses or supermen to whom, in a flash, has come a great idea like those which are supposed to have revealed the law of gravitation to Newton or a primary conception of electricity to Franklin. It has been the slow recognition of human needs coming out in the average mind rather than in that of the exceptional individual. In no single case — save, perhaps, in that of the cotton-gin — has it been other than a gradual step in evolution.

## Farmboy Ingenuity

For the most part these slow, halting steps have been taken by the men who had grown up on the farm where, recognizing the need, they could see, now and then, ahead in their desire for a better plough, an improved method of gathering or threshing grain, a lighter wagon, or, in the only field in which this country has made any original contribution, to the improvement of livestock: the need for a horse with greater speed without impairment of usefulness on the farm or as a general roadster.

### FARMBOY INGENUITY

It is easy to see why the new steps taken in the development of the reaper and mower, the threshing-machine, the sawmill, the churn, the handling of food for animals, and in practically every other agricultural or mechanical process, have come from the ingenuity of the farmboy. If special credit is claimed for the artisan—the actual worker in wood or iron—it must not be forgotten that he has been drawn for three hundred years from the farm where mechanical ingenuity as a gift has also conformed to necessity. In other cases, the farmboy has conceived the idea of an improvement and carried it to the artisan\*—one of his own type—to be worked into model or finished product.

This growing demand for quantity in implements and

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\* The craftsman there, the smith with that metal of his, with these tools, with these cunning methods,—how little of all he does is properly *his* work! All past inventive men work there with him;—as indeed with all of us, in all things.—Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (Everyman Edition), p. 330.

## Pioneer Foundations

tools did not conflict with the still more insistent need for quality. From the beginning of our history, the latter was always in evidence. As the arable area increased, followed by a solid prosperity, ploughs, cultivators, wagons, harrows, and threshers had to be the best possible in their time. When working with trees, the woodman demanded the best axe; when mowing, he must have the most effective scythe; when building house, barn, or fence, the best saws, planes, hammers, and hatchets must be found. When he changed to field work, nothing but the lightest, keenest hoe, spade, shovel, or corn cutter would serve his purpose. The prices of these articles were high, as most of them were made in England and subject to heavy charges for duties and transportation.

These set the pace for quality in domestic articles when home competition came slowly to supply them and also pushed our manufacturers into supplying the heavier machines in which they came to be the dependence. Every improvement in any implement was soon adopted by each maker, or met by another device, perhaps more effective. Happily, it was never possible to build a tariff wall so high that it could not be scaled. Real competition, being thus preserved, acted as a spur to the domestic manufacturer and the ever busy and thoughtful inventor who sprang into the open market in the most unexpected times and places.

Thus, the farmer, furnishing the impulse towards improvement and the ideas that made it possible, could always be depended upon to provide a market for the completed article. The coöperation and good-will between maker and

## Farmboy Ingenuity

user was also a strong element in promoting success along the line, so that enterprise grew by what it fed on. No jealousies distracted either party to this unconscious contract. Prices were high; but this was due to royalties, transportation costs over long distances, and narrow demand. Credits were long and easy. The exchange of ideas went forward steadily and so far as good feeling and understanding were elements in the account probably no time in history was more filled with them than that between 1830 and 1870 when, throughout the Pioneer region, the foundations of industry were laid deep and strong.

Nor could the farm machinery, developed between the years mentioned, have been successful except for the handiness of the farmer. A stupid people would not have provided a promising field for devices every one of which depended upon facility in both setting up and running. From the first, it was not necessary for John Deere with his great prairie plough, or McCormick with his reaper, or Case with his threshing-machine, or the Studebakers with their wagons, to send men to put them into working order. The man who had the enterprise to buy one and the money or the credit to pay for it could be depended upon so to know, or to follow directions, that he could put it into operation without help from the maker.

It is difficult in these days to realize what an interest — almost an excitement — these machines produced. Farmers would drive to Chicago from long distances, from all directions, and carry back a reaper. Reaching home before the beginning of harvest, when no circus would be more

## Pioneer Foundations

warmly welcomed or viewed with greater astonishment, neighbors would flock in from near and far with an offer of every kind of help. As a consequence, a new business was developed almost without thought: that of reaping grain for others. For many years this was done for a dollar an acre. As four horses and two men were required to run the early machines the price was not considered excessive even when harvest wages did not rise above a dollar a day. The owner of the machine was, however, able to get help in his own harvest — his neighbors working out the reaper tolls. For a time the same conditions entered into charges for mowing, although these were lower owing to the smaller amount of labor and horse power involved.

When he once entered upon his career as an enterprising man, the owner of a machine was compelled to maintain his reputation. He must have a reaper or mower with the latest improvements: otherwise a neighbor or a newcomer, still more progressive or successful, would challenge his original charter or monopoly. Thus, the really successful farmer had to proceed from the original heavy four-horse machine requiring two men, down through the dropper and the self-raker, all of which came into use in succession between 1860 and 1870, followed, soon after, by the self-binder. But, in spite of changes and improvements the successful originals of all farm machines were the real wonders. They established general principles of which their improved successors were no more than the logical development. The time came when all could grow the plant because all had the seed.



*DEVELOPMENT OF LIVESTOCK*



## DEVELOPMENT OF LIVESTOCK

WHEN the Pioneer started west, the sale of livestock was practically limited to the neighborhoods in which domestic meat animals were grown for use or for consumption as food. The all-round improvement in the horse did not seriously begin in England until the early days of the first James, and it was long before it produced this animal in the variety that with the spread of the factory system and the consequent increase in population became a necessity.

The movement, culminating in the work of Thomas Bakewell in the middle of the eighteenth century, by means of which, in the two generations previous to 1780 the weight of meat-producing animals was doubled at little more than half the age formerly common for marketing, had exercised an influence upon the world in a political no less than in an economic sense. Coincident with these changes in the animals long used for human food was also the growth of the transportation system, itself forced by the demands of a greatly increased density of population in England. The revival of canals, and the slow development of the crude device which was finally to become the railroad, made it possible to take stock-growing out of the category of a local industry. When meat could be carried to remote markets, the rest was a question of time and demand. It was the beginning of the movement which had

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made the people of given countries, grown to numbers far beyond those of earlier days, largely dependent upon meat supplies grown hundreds and thousands of miles away.

### *THE PLACE OF THE HORSE*

AMERICA contributed practically nothing to these improvements in domestic animals. At the end of the first hundred years of our history the horse was probably inferior as an animal to his progenitor when first brought over. The poverty of the people, but principally their small number, gave little impulse to improvement. Only in Virginia was the horse used for anything resembling sport; even there the hunting was so primitive and so closely related to primal needs that in the dense forests of the wilderness the stalking of the man with a gun needed little aid from the strength and endurance of the horse, or the speed and scent of the dog.

The horse became an important element in the life of the Indian as soon as the red man discovered that it put him more nearly upon an equal footing with his enemy. It is probable, though not demonstrable, that the Indian did something to improve the lost qualities of the horse as a riding animal and thus to restore him to a prestige impaired since the days of the Arab when horsemanship was one of the fine arts; but bad surroundings, lack of care, ignorance of the niceties and economics of breeding still kept the animal small. The fitness of the white man for directing and effecting the improvement in quality was scarcely more in evidence. While he could rely upon the

## The Place of the Horse

slow but patient ox to meet the need for power, there was little encouragement to develop or perfect the draught horse; so, the latter had to wait until he was introduced from England, Normandy, and Flanders and could be adapted to a new environment. There was little demand for the roadster because there were so few highways upon which to drive him.

It is true that in America, as upon every field where the settler has flourished, the population was mounted; but it knew little of quality in the high sense of that word as it had been demonstrated upon the edge of the desert or upon the sporting or military fields of the old world. Thus, the American horse so far from acquiring an individuality was still in the making when the Pioneers, swarming over the mountains in ox-carts, began the settlement of Kentucky and then overflowed first into the wilderness of the Northwest Territory and then out upon the prairies. But, if he took a long time to produce variety and character, it still remained true that the horse, rude as he was, compared with both his traditions and his possibilities, was under control, and, next to the man, was the great civilizer of his time. He was almost a sacred animal — his value was highly appraised, he was guarded like a child or a woman, his loss was mourned, and his theft or destruction was avenged. In the earliest days the prudent head of a family made his lonely way on horseback over mountains, across rivers, through forests, next to impenetrable, that he might know for himself of a surety whether it was safe and prudent to venture into or through the wilderness.

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In spite of the absence of this mettle, the incident of high-breeding, the horse of the time adapted himself well to the varied work he had to do. Great strength was not needed, nor even unusual speed but a fair average of those qualities which gave to the animal an all-round effectiveness. He did not cut much of a figure in the original breaking of the tough sod of the prairie; but, when this was once done he furnished power to the farm for all its operations. He had so adjusted himself to the food provided for him in many changes of climate and soil that he could maintain his strength upon it and stand an exposure that would have tried the endurance of his finer brother. He had thus been so fitted for any unusual amount of exertion that he rivalled his master in industry and adaptability.

No like animal, whether useful or ornamental, has ever been able to command greater devotion, even from a knightly master, than did the horse that helped to conquer the West. The skill that was developed in knowing him grew into an instinct : a sort of sixth sense. A student of natural history might have learned many lessons from the Pioneer about the structure of the horse as well as about his character and his usefulness. The mystery in judging him, the facility for seeing faults, the brutal candor in pointing them out when owned by another, and the deftness in concealing them in his own, that knowledge used in the determining of age, a gift now almost lost, the insight into disposition, the suspicion of balkiness or viciousness, the quick recognition of a difference in values when trading one for another, and, in the latter case, the still

## The Place of the Horse

higher quality of reading his rival's mind, united to make the born horse-trader a man apart, far above anything described in *David Harum* and other books dealing with this subtle gift. Even the horses, whose ownership was involved in a trade, were credited with the power, attributed to the slave, of watching with selfish interest the processes incident to exchange, and thus of showing off well or ill in accordance with their desire to remain with an old owner or go to a new one.

The skilled horse-trader acquired almost an uncanny reputation in his own neighborhood not of necessity from anything shady in his character but because his gifts were recognized and feared. As each horse in a township was nearly as well known as his owner, an expert with whom trading was almost a mania had to seek victims or opportunities farther afield. Many a man would take advantage of a lull in work to ride off on some animal not quite satisfactory, for the purpose of seeking a mate. This was a difficult game because it put all the trader's powers to the test to pick out a match for an absent horse, or he would drive away with a pair avowing some other errand when, in fact, nothing was in his mind except to return with one or two new horses better suited to fancy or need.

The art of showing off nags was one of the most rec-ondite as well as the most interesting ever practiced by men. In many cases the exchange would be advantageous to both parties, especially if they were well-matched so each might in this way get what he most wanted. Taken all in all horse trading was one of the distinctive features

## Pioneer Foundations

to be found in the Pioneer life and often guided the expert to some other branch of work or business. It was a natural gift which often indicated to men that some kind of merchandizing was their special forte.

### *THE HORSE COMES INTO CLASSES*

It was not long before horses began to be divided into classes. As communities increased in importance and prosperity came, attention would be turned to the breeding of different kinds. The special riding horse generally came first, though it was soon found desirable that he should also be a good driver in double harness. It was long before a distinct plough horse in the form of the Percheron or the Shire was adopted. He was too heavy for the road so that a general purpose animal about sixteen hands high, weighing around twelve hundred pounds, was found more available for all uses except for riding. Still later, as variety could be afforded, light vehicles displaced the heavy ones and the riding horse was no longer such an urgent necessity. The driving horse with a good trotting power, not for racing but expedition in business or pleasure, became common. But, by the time that all these had come Pioneer conditions had begun to disappear and stability was displacing confusion.

The horsemanship of the Pioneer was less theatrical or showy than that of the vaunted cowboy; but it dealt with the animal not alone as a mount but also for driving. Such a rider did not belong to a type that wanted to become part of a circus or to amuse a gaping crowd. He did not affect



## The Horse Comes Into Classes

the single horse to harness, but give him the lines over two, four, or six, or even eight, with the right kind of wagon or sled, harness, and whip, either with a company of merry-makers or a heavy load, and he could handle them with characteristic skill. When four horses were necessary to draw a reaper, the old custom of putting a boy on one of the leaders to guide them was given up and the driver managed both his four-in-hand and his machine. It required a coolness and skill seldom brought into play in the handling of a coach because in this case the driver had no help but was dependent wholly upon himself for managing both machine and its driving power.

The sure-footedness of the Pioneer riding horse, acquired by long practice over difficult roads and through heavy timber early attracted the attention of foreign travelers. While the breeds did not develop special qualities until the Morgan horse was fairly perfected, these soon grew out of necessity and use. Probably at no time or place in modern history has the horse been so distinctively a riding horse as he was in America from the middle of the eighteenth century until the close of the Civil War.

This horse, with that variety of gait which has made Kentucky famous, was no accident; nor was he so much the outcome of horse breeding as of the uses which made it necessary for the man and the horse to cultivate and perfect these gaits. The trotter, which came later, grew out of the continued devotion to the horse and the desire to find a new form of an old sport. It was an evolution slowly reached, and had its beginnings mainly within the

## Pioneer Foundations

period covered by this study, although it was not to reach its perfection until some years later than the period marked by its ending.

Along these simple lines the horse was the close associate of the man. His treatment, even in a period when there was much coarseness and some brutality, was better than might have been expected. Among some classes or types of the population this was done in imitation of their real superiors and leaders but mainly from the necessity which recognized the horse to be next in importance to the man. For the most part, he was well housed and amply though often somewhat coarsely fed.

The horse worked no harder than his master; and in the hands of idle or lazy owners he was often better off, so far as mere hard work was concerned, than under the ownership of more energetic men. Where he was treated viciously he generally returned it in kind; he would kick, or bite, or balk, and often became almost unmanageable; but in general this conduct would change when he fell into the hands of a considerate owner. Wherever a hired man was kept this merciful treatment was enforced often at the cost of severe suffering by some incorrigible reprobate. No facility or willingness could save such a man from punishment with a blacksnake whip or the fists, or dismissal, or all.

With the Pioneer the institution of lynching was built up around the horse. He was such a constituent part of life that to steal him incurred the fate decreed, as the clay tablets attest, in like cases from the times of King Ham-

## Improving Breeds of Cattle

murabi. It came to mean the summary punishment of the offender, without the possibility of successful appeal either to law or mercy. It stood next to the taking of human life because it was considered that many lives were dependent upon the work of the horse. If the statue of a saint to represent the Pioneer should ever be raised, it would be difficult to find a subject more appropriate than the figure of a horse under the name of St. Equus.

### IMPROVING BREEDS OF CATTLE

BUT the horse did not come into the ordinary definition of livestock, a term reserved for the meat-producing animals : cattle, swine, and sheep, in the order named. As the outside demand for meats increased, and with it the facilities for transport from grower to consumer, it became more and more evident that this feature of agriculture was its mainstay. As much as that meant, it was to make the farmer more than a breeder : he had to become a careful student of this branch of his work, but also a manufacturer on his own account and a merchant, watching markets far and near. It was not long before he learned that success depended quite as much upon the kind of stock as upon the number.

In order to improve this quality of his stock he had to know what was best adapted to the soil, the climate, and the food demand under which he carried on his work; to discover this he was forced to conduct experiments slowly and with commanding patience. It was not long before there was taken into every neighborhood the best available

## Pioneer Foundations

male animals of those breeds deemed practical. This was not done by groups of farmers or by coöperative bodies or by fancy farmers : it was dependent upon some natural leader, a man who had, perhaps, scarcely more than fairly started in his calling, who had insight and enterprise so that everybody within reach had the advantage of all the improvements known at such a distance from centers in horses, cattle, swine, sheep, or poultry. Between 1840 and 1870 all over the Pioneer region districts or counties, not five years settled, acquired improved stock and, while they were limited at first to a small proportion of the best farmers, the influence upon progress was so decisive that the vital first step had been taken. The rest was only a matter of time and persistence.

This improvement was far from universal. In general, the average quality of all livestock was contemptible—probably little better than that common in England at the opening of the eighteenth century. This fact is in no way surprising. There had been no place, time, or opportunity for improvement. Bleak New England was certainly little better adapted for this improvement than Virginia with its devotion to one product and the slow improvement of its agriculture in other crops. The wilderness, while its people were constantly in motion, presented few opportunities for thinking of quality. Nowhere along this line of population growth was there knowledge of anything at all seriously better than the ordinary horse, scrub cattle, thin hogs, and scrawny sheep that followed them on this long journey, begging for the little corn that would enable

## Improving Breeds of Cattle

them to survive the perils incident to settlement by man and beast.

It was only when the fertile plains of western New York and the valleys of eastern Pennsylvania were fairly developed that the American farmer was able, by adaptation and originality, to contribute in some degree to the methods which the time needed for producing a given food result. From the necessity of keeping the horse in working condition when care of him early became essential he was sheltered, generally well and regularly fed, accustomed to proper hours and systematic rest and in a high degree petted, so far as this term could be applied to the conduct of the Pioneer.

(Little systematic study has been given, so far as books can reveal it, to the history of the livestock industry of this country. Dr. Bruce treats of it with intelligence in his economic studies of Virginia but, unfortunately, these do not extend beyond the end of the seventeenth century. Weeden pays little attention to it, because the climate and industrial development of New England did not lend themselves, essentially, to the growth of animals. Thus far the economic growth of Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland has not attracted its proper share of study or treatment. Our students in agriculture seem, for the most part, to have contented themselves when they prepared some dry monograph on current growth, or struggled to reveal a surface knowledge of the same thing. There is ample scope in this large question, involving as it does the history of man's primal industry, for original contributions to agricul-

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tural knowledge both in its history and its workings. It is also impossible, in the multiplicity of books in the present day, even to get a connected, comprehensive study of the development, almost revolutionary in its character, of the beginnings and the growth of farm machinery.)

But the process of caring for cattle was a slow growth. They were left to forage for themselves in the Virginia woods and came almost to run wild with little more attention in winter than in summer. The same conclusion was even more true in the matter of swine. During the long passage through the wilderness cattle had, in the main, to shift for themselves and thus to find shelter in woods, behind fences, and even in the dry beds of rivers or sloughs. Until the threshing-machine was fully developed and with it the large stacks of straw that it left in the open fields, cattle were generally thrown out with almost no protection from the blasts of winter. With this raw material the building of sheds increased though in order to get food animals were often forced to eat the roofs from over their heads so that early spring would find ordinary stock cattle almost houseless.

### THE TREATMENT OF THE MILCH COW

THE milk cow had a little better care. She stood next to the horse in importance and immediate value; but even her portion was far from ideal for an animal which must make so much of return to man. Her yield of milk would have put her at the very rear of even the worst herd now to be found anywhere between the Missouri and Mississippi

## The Treatment of the Milch Cow

rivers and the far-off Atlantic coast. She was generally small in size, and had her calf to nourish besides supplying her milk to many hungry children. One relief came from the fact that from the poor quality and small quantity, every farmer had to keep two or three cows where one would now serve. With all the facilities for feeding and keeping cows, probably one-half the families did not own one; so while there was milk to give away to poor neighbors, its sale was practically unknown. If the cow failed to breed within any given year, regardless of what she had done in the past, she never had another chance but was fattened and the meat she produced was distributed in the neighborhood to be eaten fresh or was packed in a barrel for summer use as corned beef. The same fate awaited the heifer when she had entered her third summer and still remained barren. It was seldom that a steer was butchered for family use; he was too valuable, either as an ox or for shipment, to be sacrificed upon the altar of the family.

The vicious cow was more than an incident; she was an element in this early life. Added to the occasional case of bad temper in the animal was the awful exposure to cold, heat, floods, noisome insects, and the brave struggle for forage. Worst of all was the carelessness or brutality of boys or hired men, or more frequently from cross, tired women with peevish children waiting impatiently for the milk while still warm. Almost uniformly the milking was done in the open without shelter for animal or human. The cow, suffering perhaps from an over-full udder which demanded relief, with teats cracked from the cold, or torn

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by briars or struggles in the brush when seeking food, was expected to bear the roughness of treatment from a coarse, freezing man or an ignorant learner and then to stand, thus exposed and treated, until the milking process was over.

In the main, the methods of gathering and saving the milk were dirty and discreditable. In these days, when the product is offered for sale, they would not be countenanced; but when used at home and, in perhaps half the cases, it was collected in a way as primitive as in patriarchal days when men wandered with their flocks and herds.

While thus describing a general tendency, it must not be concluded that ill-treatment of the milk-producing animal and slovenliness in the man or woman were universal. Here again it became a question of type; the really good, efficient farmer taking the best care of his cows in the matter of shelter and food as well as in methods of handling, milking, and caring for it in cool cellars or wells or spring houses, and in making butter, which was the only form in which the cow yielded a money return. In such cases the animals were afforded the same good housing provided for the horse, the money profit being multiplied many fold and the example of efficiency spreading slowly down among that part of the population open to influence.

### *HERDING AND CARE OF STOCK CATTLE*

BEFORE the advent of the railroad it was easier to market fat cattle than any other farm product. They were generally kept as stock, fed well in the winter, sent away in summer for herding to the prairies where they were carefully



## Herding and Care of Stock Cattle

tended at the most eligible places chosen for quality of grass, convenience to water, shade, sheltered from storms, and guarded, in herds of about two hundred and fifty, with an attention that showed the value of coöperation in owners and character and training in watchers. At intervals during the season some of the many owners, generally those most interested, would inspect the herd in order to assure himself and to report to his neighbors or associates. Such a herd was gathered from owners of the same type, often separated by considerable distances, composed of the same general character of cattle as to age, quality, and future market conditions. The herder, generally some studious young man known to all, had to live with his animals by day and sleep near them at night so that they were never left without oversight.

When brought home in the autumn they were returned to their owners and separated into classes roughly fixed by age, those that had passed three years being so selected for feeding that no others interfered with them. The best sheds made of straw and closed, except for narrow openings on the north side, were provided for them, but they were fed and watered in the open fields. In May or June, after they were four years old having reached a weight of from twelve hundred to fourteen hundred pounds, they were ready for market. As their summer feeding had been in the boundless prairies they had ample exercise, so that their ability to stand driving to market still a hundred or more miles away had not been seriously impaired. This, again, was a delicate operation and was conducted with a regard to

## Pioneer Foundations

merciful treatment that could not have been improved. Those that became footsore were carried along with their fellows in low hung wagons fitted for the purpose.

The farmer who had the training and persistence to pursue this course over a series of years soon found himself independent if not wealthy. Often, the first year would provide him with the modest capital necessary to go on to improve his stock and equipment and to put and keep him out of any considerable debt. In another few years he would be able to increase his holdings of land, a desire always existent and generally easy of satisfaction in those migratory days, to erect better buildings, and finally when markets came nearer to adjust himself to the conditions which he had helped to create. The farmer who could not do this lost his place in the ranks of enterprising men and his neighborhood soon knew him no more : he had only to join the movers-on.

So far as this process involved the herding feature, which was indeed the beginning of ranching of a different order, it was short-lived. The open, unbroken prairie continually receded; but, by the time it was gone the cultivation of tame grasses had made its departure a blessing and the cattle industry had taken its place as a systematic one — built up as a new thing where nothing had existed before. It was only another illustration of the capacity of the Pioneer farmer to adjust himself quickly to a new environment which, indeed, his class had made for itself.

A great many, perhaps the majority, failed; but the process of growth was so slow that perhaps the proportion

## Swine as a Form of Currency

of these was smaller than in any other branch of activity seen in the growth of this country out of simple into complex conditions. In the pursuit of this industry there was an unsuspected vision of the requirements and the demands of the future, and the successors of these Pioneers (for it must not be forgotten that it was wholly the work of the early settlers) have merely built upon the foundations thus laid.

### SWINE AS A FORM OF CURRENCY

IN his different stages of development the Pioneer has generally had some product that would fetch ready money. Living through successive generations practically limited to barter, he had of necessity to have or find some article that would enable him to meet the demands of the taxgatherer and buy the supplies that he could not produce or exchange with an accessible neighbor. Taking things in the mass, in Virginia, tobacco, in New England, the fisheries, enabled him to provide the circulating medium which, in the case of his predecessor, was the wampum of the Indian.

In the remainder of the country the swine furnished this ready money. Everywhere in the southern colonies its flesh became a standard article of diet in spite of prejudice and attachment to the letter of Scripture where, in those days of literalness, reference to it as an unclean animal was not easily explained or overcome. In Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania it was universal, and from there it spread to the southern colonies and into the West as settlement went slowly forward. In the former colonies

## Pioneer Foundations

and their offshoots, the hog (the term swine was never in general use) ran at large, and in so doing caused an unusual amount of trouble. Always recognized as a born marauder, its victims were protected by a varied assortment of laws, ordinances, regulations, and proclamations. It was probably responsible for more damage claims than all other causes combined.

And yet, in a favorable climate and encouraging surroundings it grew not only in numbers but in importance. In addition to furnishing wholesome food in ample quantities at a nominal cost for labor the universal demand soon made it the producer of ready money. This was increased as wild game declined and the settler plunged farther into the wilderness. Once in the business, it was as easy to raise two hogs as one, or twenty as ten, and as, in spite of this facility, many families could not or did not grow their own supplies, there was an assured demand for the surplus at a price which, while low, was fairly remunerative. In the scarcity of money, a married hired man could be paid in part with a ham, a shoulder, a side of bacon, or some lard, which he would carry home to his family, or these articles could be traded for something else, or turned into the store in payment for necessary products from the outside world. The hog was the early and sure reliance in paying a debt on the farm, taxes of all kinds, interest on the small credit necessary, or available for doctor's bills, the extension of his business, or additional land as wanted. It was often the only meat-producing animal which was moved bodily as population shifted from place to place.

## Swine as a Form of Currency

As this process carried settlement into regions of severe cold, the methods of caring for the animal had to be changed. The mast, that is, the nut of the oak or the beech and other natural foods found in the woods, gave way to grain, mainly corn, to more care, and to selection and improvement in quality. The swift razorback of Virginia and Kentucky was gradually replaced by the lazy, heavy, fat-producing varieties, drawn, as in the case of other animals, from England where the change had long been under way.

Other than with the horse this improvement was, for reasons inherent in rapid breeding, the earliest and most effective seen in the new settlements. The result was always the same. In spite of the distance from market, the scarcity of bankable funds, or the ravages of disease, the hog became more and more the reliance of the farmer. Its growth was elevated from an incident into a certainty — one of the most difficult and delicate branches of the business that he had to learn. When grain could not be carried to an outside market, the growing of the hog had to be adjusted to the conditions thus created. It required calculation to determine whether or not the feeding of corn, salable at twenty-five cents a bushel, or any available price, was profitable.

The rising value of land, the added cost of maintaining the quality of the animal, and the risk had to be taken into account. By 1870 all these elements in the problem had become serious matters and there was a term of years between the end of the Civil War and that date when the

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farmer had to manage very closely in order to maintain this branch of his industry. By this time the introduction of finer, more delicate breeds, had made serious diseases more rife, so that business acumen had to take the place of the happy-go-lucky methods of the past.

### BUTCHERING AND CURING PROCESSES

THE slaughter, dressing, and curing of the hog were something that the farmer had to learn just as he mastered the growing of corn and the various processes incident to his main business. On the prosperous farm, that day in early December fixed for butchering (after the corn crop had been gathered and final preparations were under way for the winter) was one of the busiest and most important of the whole year. Then the great kettles for heating the water, the barrels or hogsheads into which the slaughtered animals were twice plunged, the careful dressing after they had been hung on long poles erected for the purpose, their gradual pushing together until the flesh was cooled for cutting into the proper parts, the division into heads, feet, hams, shoulders, sides, back-bones, fat, ribs, and offal — all these processes were carried on with an efficiency or a carelessness that marked the character and training of the man in charge.

Often one or more farmers with a considerable number of animals would combine; while other neighbors with only one or two would also bring theirs and unite in carrying on the work. By nightfall everything would be done, the annual killing was over, and the supply of meat had met

## Butchering and Curing Processes

the demand of one or more main families and their immediate neighbors. For some time, livers, hearts, ribs, and back-bones would be eaten fresh—the frost acting as a natural preservative—the meats whether cured with salt in barrels, or smoked as the spring opened, serving for the rest of the year so far as this variety of animal food was concerned.

The smoking process was the maintenance of an old art handed down from century to century but always adapted to local conditions. In the Middle West it was done in small log or frame smokehouses or sheds, not far from the house. The hardwood chips that had been carefully saved from all the chopping of the winter were put into a little heap, supplemented by limbs from the same tree, and in or under it a smouldering fire lighted which was never permitted to come to a blaze. If fire came both house and contents were often lost, so that success literally depended upon having smoke without fire which had to be maintained in this smothered form day and night. When, at the end of about three weeks of watchfulness the cured meats came out, they were ready to do their part in the assured sustenance of the family during the next year. They supplemented, in their particular form, that ample supply of provisions required for home use, for exchange with neighbors, and for hospitality. They worked into that general system of foresight which made independence the pride and the distinguishing characteristic of the Pioneer.

Among the larger farmers, in the very earliest day, some part of the product thus roughly prepared was carried to

## Pioneer Foundations

market in the larger towns, perhaps two hundred miles away. In the intermediate settlements, hundreds of men would be engaged in this work in December and January, so that it almost gave an impression at times of an animated and general moving back over the roads only recently traversed by families with all the paraphernalia of migration. At the end of this long journey, much depended upon the quality of the stock and even more upon the facility and neatness in dressing the animals — which had become almost a separate trade, though carried on wholly upon the farm.

When, upon the approach of the railroad, packing-houses sprang up as they did in the larger towns some of them were started by the most enterprising and best trained of the men who had learned the business of their own account as farmers. The training of the professional butcher was long deferred as the laborers in these incipient factories were generally drawn from the more ambitious younger men who had to make their way in life. It was but a repetition of the story of the growth of every line of American manufacture : iron and steel, ploughs, wagons, tools, implements, machines, textiles, whether of wool or cotton — the workmen, mainly drawn from the immediate neighborhood had little to learn and often could teach much.

### *SLOW PROGRESS IN SHEEP GROWING*

SHEEP growing developed slowly in all the Pioneer States west or south of Ohio and never became a dependence. As early as 1840 the old-fashioned domestic processes of card-



## Slow Progress in Sheep Growing

ing, spinning, and weaving had begun to decline : the American woolen mill was fairly under way. While these processes survived it was almost a necessity for each neighborhood to grow its own wool; but even then mutton did not become a profitable venture. It did not appeal to the popular palate, and it was long before its dressing became familiar knowledge.

After the settler emerged from the woods, the difficulties incident to this branch of industry were enhanced. The rank prairie grass was not adapted to sheep, and the lack of shelter was so serious a drawback that even the Vermont-bred merino did not thrive; but the most serious trouble was the dog.

Whatever the quality of animal carried into a new country or whatever effort may have been made to improve breeds, no such process entered into the dog. Perhaps as large a proportion as ninety-five of every hundred were of the worst mongrel order. As the supply seemed to be legion (the proportion in both number and badness bearing an inverse ratio to the uselessness of their owners) the dog, instead of being a credit to his masters, became and remained through most of the settlement period in the West a nuisance, more destructive than his predecessor and relative the wolf. Being so worthless and often the property of people little better than himself, neither had anything to lose. It became the practice of industrious and enterprising men to shoot dogs on sight : not from cruelty but as they would destroy other vermin for the protection of themselves and the community.

## Pioneer Foundations

If other conditions had been the most favorable possible for sheep growing it could not have been carried on while the yellow dog persisted. In the eastern and older parts of the State where the fringe of timber along the streams was deeper, sheep were early introduced and flourished fairly well because here tame grasses were soon acclimated and grown. This process continued inward from the river and extended, in a modified way, along the larger streams. Here, small woollen mills would often utilize the water power in their many tributaries thus seeking some part of their raw materials in their own localities; but with all these small advantages the number of sheep which had reached only 149,960 in 1850 had increased to 259,041 by 1860.

The Civil War made the raising of sheep an emergency industry so that by 1870 the number had increased to 855,493. It became almost an industry of guesswork, entered upon without knowledge or preparation in a sort of blind response to the rates fixed in the Morrell tariff, then recently enacted. A change in manners and fashions had also made a new demand for woolens, while the prosperity of the war period promoted the movement. An effort was made by law to abate the dog nuisance, and flocks of sheep, ill-chosen as to breed, ill-cared for, the meat little known and still less appreciated as food, made of no avail the well-meant and earnest work of men accustomed not to failure but to success. By 1880, within the ten years that lie beyond the limits of this study, the number of sheep declined to 455,359 or almost as rapidly as it had

## Care and Sale of Animals

grown and thus another artificial effort to establish an industry demonstrated its fatuity — this decline being typical of the entire region.

### CARE AND SALE OF ANIMALS

No present day knowledge and even no effort of the imagination can measure the task of caring for animals on the wide open prairies where there was no natural shelter and no time or opportunity to provide it through barns, sheds, high fences, groves, or other contrivances suggested by necessity or ingenuity. All this made the task of the settler a constant trial of work, patience, and persistence. He knew that upon the care of his stock depended his home and any reward of his labors to which he might aspire. He must watch the approaching rain or snow storm, the tornado or blizzard, which might scatter his few cattle, hogs, or horses to the four winds and often doom them to destruction in spite of their effort to protect themselves. It was his business never to let them get out of reach, and no labor or exposure could be spared which would insure this result. After a few years, by the planting of cottonwood or soft maple, he could have a fairly efficient windbreak. In his dire necessity he thus made himself a forester long before conservation or even Arbor Day were so much as heard of as public movements — which, though they have been interesting to watch, had their beginnings in the most obvious necessity, rather than in the minds, much less the practice, of self-assumed leaders or guardians who have long posed as the special proponents of a system.

## Pioneer Foundations

It was well into the Civil War before hay and animal scales came into general use even in the older West. It would probably be safe to say that they did not become universal until after 1870 when the region had attained a large measure of prosperity and wealth. It was possible to weigh a pig or a sheep on the old-fashioned beam-scales or steelyards, but there were few even of these. The weight of cattle and hogs, when ready for sale, was determined by guess, with the usual by-play between buyer and seller. Sometimes the dispute would be left to a supposed expert; but in most cases it was settled upon the well-known splitting-the-difference practice. After much negotiation over an animal or a drove, the seller would make his maximum claim and the buyer his maximum concession and the sum would be divided by two. As this guessing of the weights of animals was one of the things upon which men prided themselves, sufficient earnestness was generated to have settled grave and much-debated questions in law, politics, or religion.

It must be said that the buyer had the advantage in that he could take or leave the stock offered but mainly because his experience gave him standards upon which to form a judgment. He was accustomed to drive his purchases to markets where scales were used and, making natural allowances for loss of weight, he could estimate with some approach to accuracy what he would get paid for. He was also advantaged by his constant study of prices; whereas many a remote farmer knew nothing about them except what he obtained from better informed neighbors who were

## Care and Sale of Animals

not dealers. After scales came in the seller would often give his stock a goodly supply of salt with access to water just before they were to be weighed. In fact, none of the tricks of trade familiar from the days of ancient Egypt downwards were either unknown or unattempted even in a society supposed to be so simple as that of the Pioneer life.

The importance of the female of all animals was much in evidence as it always has been in every form of simple society. As a result, the animal with breeding possibilities was carefully conserved; on the other hand, demonstrated or suspected barrenness was a signal for the modified verdict inserted by Colley Cibber in Richard III, "off with her head."

Domestic animals were shaded through classes and qualities pretty much on the same line as their owners. The breeds were improved gradually and steadily from the top : the best horses, cattle, sheep, swine, and poultry belonged to the better and more enterprising families. A market was found somehow for "culls" down below, and others, still further down, in turn. If, by some chance, the poorer order of man found himself in possession of a superior cow, horse, or even hog, it was swiftly discovered and he would soon trade it for an inferior one with something to boot — the latter being to him more attractive than pride in the quality of his animals or regard for the future. The part of the promise that "to him who hath shall be given" was carried out in all literalness in the Iowa country during the eighteen thirties and forties.

## Pioneer Foundations

### MARKETS AND PRICES

THE fattening of livestock was much slower than now, due in part to the inferior quality and the lack of knowledge of how to mix feeds; but the process continued even after the improvement in this respect had substituted Shorthorn for native breeds. Calves, pigs, or lambs were seldom slaughtered, the youngest animal that was habitually sacrificed being a three-year-old heifer when barrenness was assured. There was a pride, inherited from English habits and traditions, in sending to market large animals; but perhaps the principal reason was found in the universal belief that meat produced slowly was more wholesome and nutritious than that which came from a stuffing process similar in character to the making of *pâté de fois gras* in Switzerland and Germany, or of "baby beef" in later days. It was the custom to send steers to market upon the completion of their fourth year when by 1870 with improved stocks and stall-feeding the best animals would have reached weights running from 1300 to 1500 pounds. Hogs were kept until they were eighteen months or two years old, and an average weight for many droves of eighty or a hundred was often three hundred pounds. Corn was cheap, perhaps averaging from 1850 to 1870 around twenty cents a bushel and seldom reaching twenty-five cents except during the war period. Woods along the river bottoms were available for summer pasturage for hogs; while the prairies afforded free range for cattle at costs which bear no comparison with modern standards.

In spite of low prices, there was general prosperity :

## Markets and Prices

good living, constant additions to the best farms; growth in religious, educational, and social advantages; and a content that could not be mistaken. All this was accompanied by the steady weeding out of the less progressive elements in the population, their places being taken by newcomers with property and character. It would be safe to insist that so far as such a condition can be measured in terms of mathematics the average improvement in character within the forty years under consideration, taking the Pioneer region as a whole, was not less than thirty or forty per cent.

This would have been impossible except for the development, steadily and with persistence, of the livestock industry. This was due, too, to leaders who bore a comparatively small numerical proportion to the whole population. These men, found in each fairly settled county probably to the number of ten or twenty, by example, industry, intelligence, the necessary expenditure, the organization of agricultural societies, with fairs and neighborhood coöperative bodies, both formal and informal, introduced the better breeds. They carefully supervised the methods of feeding, the treatment by themselves in the absence of all veterinary advice of old diseases and of the new ones incident to the strange surroundings in which animal life found itself, and thus often within periods of five or ten years made their neighborhoods almost ideal, though plain, centers of prosperous life, promising in the quality of men and women they were forming, and really contributing to the best conditions of their time, simple though these may now seem to many of their successors.

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Their high-priced lands, even in the older counties, probably never then reached an average value of twenty-five dollars an acre as farms—prices which, gauged by any fair standard, did not represent one-half their actual cost in human labor to say nothing of capital, ability, organizing power, and the other qualities which enable real men to accumulate property.

### *HOW RAPIDLY PROGRESS WAS REGISTERED*

It is thus almost impossible to get a realizing sense of the progress made in this country, especially in the newer parts, in the improvement of livestock between 1830 and 1865. This process was going on all over the western world; but the need for change here, owing to backward conditions, was more urgent than that existing anywhere else. Besides, the ability to register this growth was greater, owing to the interest newly aroused in the farming element. It seemed as if the fury of change and improvement incident to railroad building had broken out more distinctly among the agricultural classes than any other, something which from that time forward accounted for their domination in our life. They thus entered upon their new-found task with a zeal seldom manifest in any movement that bears relation to the land.

This was shown first in horses, where the need was greatest; then in the development of the Shorthorn or meat-producing branch of the cattle industry; and with scarcely less intelligence and activity in swine where breeding for weight had become a necessity owing to the great distances



## How Rapidly Progress Was Registered

from market and the increased demand for the resulting food products. Thus, the few men in every county who had both the enterprise and the resources to enter upon their work on the largest available lines moved forward as with a single impulse. They formed and maintained associations, often small in the beginnings but almost nationwide. The successors of the same men that had destroyed the forests and advanced in a thin but solid phalanx to the most difficult of human conquests, now devoted themselves to the task of livestock improvement until within less than a decade the results though never overwhelming were everywhere apparent in the repetition of the old English process of the preceding century of doubling the weight of the meat-producing animals within a brief period.

A beginning made, the rest was easy — just as a victorious army once started advances by its own momentum. Growth was slower, relatively, but it was never intermitted. The movement always had new work ahead; but once begun, it carried itself along with a steadiness that never faltered, until throughout the North the end of the Civil War had registered a progress which was the highest possible tribute to a leadership that included men in every county, and in time modest followers in almost every progressive township. It was this and like movements that, within an incredibly short period, served to bring the Pioneer region into close association with all the world and finally broke down that isolation which had kept these people narrow and provincial in politics, religion, and the larger world activities.



*THE CONTRIBUTORY TRADES*



## THE OLD FASHIONED MECHANIC

THE ability to draw tools and machinery from the outside to meet the ever-broadening demand gave the settler a decided advantage over his forerunner, the colonist, in that he carried with him in larger degree the essentials of manufacture and had command in his work of the wider variety of articles that had become either necessary or desirable. The old Mercantile System, with its import and export duties; its navigation laws, with their penalties and shall nots as applied to local manufacture; and the imperfect development, even at its best estate, of organization in the domestic trades; all made the economic position of the colonist a hard one. He had always to work, not under the protecting aegis of political freedom, but with severe restriction and under a vigilant taskmaster.

The settler came into a period of comparative free trade, in every large sense of that term. He could exercise and develop his domestic industries, either for himself or others, so that he could produce food, tools, vehicles, houses, clothing, and the necessary paraphernalia of his life without outside interference — his own skill and the finding of the necessary raw materials being the prime essentials. He carried with him his own blacksmiths and machinists, wheelwrights, carpenters, spinners and weavers, millers, hatters, and others trained in mechanical trades. Even before the farmer could break his land and raise his trial crops these

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artisans were ready to set up their shops in every neighborhood large enough both to require and requite their services. They belonged to the same type from which the farmer himself was drawn: the sturdy yeoman. They were an essential part of the general scheme of life in which they found themselves. In many instances they bought land, although in few cases did they give personal labor to its cultivation.

In accordance with the customs of the time, they had learned their trades in the old and exacting school whose curriculum was fixed by the apprenticeship system plus an ability to meet demands in all the variety of work possible to it. They could not go to any other artisan for advice or instruction. If they had not learned how to fashion or repair a given article their own skill and facilities must find a way out and it must be a practical one, quickly applied. They were aided by the native ingenuity latent in their neighborhood. This condition was amateurish, especially in all metal trades. In woods many a farmer was fairly expert in the rougher tasks incident to frames for houses, while dependent upon the carpenter for making or fitting doors, windows, mantels, floors, and roofs, or upon the wheelwright or other artisans in the distinctive details of their various crafts.

### *THE BLACKSMITH AND HIS WORK*

THE most indispensable mechanic was the blacksmith. In his special work the farmer, however ingenious, could not compete. In general, he had reached what then passed for

## The Blacksmith and His Work

middle life with experience in several tasks in various stages of development. While the shoeing of horses and to some extent of oxen constituted, perhaps, the bulk of his work during the winter, the summer brought with it the making of ploughs (or their sharpening), harrows, cultivators, hoes, scythes, rakes, and tools used in field or garden. He must not only have acquired a fixed skill (something that would always stand him in stead) but must be able to work rapidly.

When something went wrong with a prairie plough leaving men and oxen idle, or with a threshing-machine where from ten to fifteen men and almost as many horses were left for the time with nothing to do, the blacksmith was expected to drop everything else and without regard to meals, sleep, or rest, to persevere until his task was done. This was the essence of his unconscious contract with his customers and he must keep it: if there was one thing that the industrial leader in a Pioneer community dreaded, more than another, it was that men assembled for a given task should be left idle while daylight and good weather were running.

The neighborhood that commanded the services of a really expert and artistic blacksmith could count itself fortunate. His trade was naturally the primary attraction, but it meant even more to have a smith who was really interested in the people who were his constituents and had their own peculiar interests. His shop was the recognized meeting place, a social center, even more important than the country store. It was the resort of boys of all ages,

## Pioneer Foundations

the older of whom were often gratified in their desire to blow the bellows or even to handle that mysterious tool, the great sledge, when two red-hot heavy bars of iron were to be cut or welded, or others were to be split into strips. The passing matron or school girl looked in through the open door with a sort of awe; so that the blacksmith who either had, or might develop, the qualities of the curmudgeon was destined to a brief career or absolute failure and might just as well make up his mind to move.

It was, however, as the meeting place of an ever ready debating society for religious questions that the smithy was most distinguished. There, the fate of those mighty and universal questions, such as baptism, infant baptism, free will, foreordination, election, predestination, the final perseverance of the saints (whatever this common though cryptic phrase might mean) were constantly under discussion. The smith literally earned his living by the sweat of his brow, but a day was never more than a day even if prolonged far into the night. No true smith could resist the challenge to talk on these subjects, then the primary problems of surrounding humanity. He was nearly always active sometimes even unctuous in the Wednesday night prayer meeting, or in the Sunday class meeting, so that in those historic days nobody even so much as thought it among possibilities that there could be an undevout blacksmith. Curiously enough, in many villages the number of blacksmiths who derived from Huguenot or Scotch-Irish origins was out of proportion to the representatives of their races and sects in the communities where, finding no repre-



## The Blacksmith and His Work

sentative churches of their own, they had been thrown into association with the Methodists and Baptists. Perhaps the very rigidity of their hereditary ultra-Protestantism made them more active in the bodies with which they had affiliated from necessity.

No man, even in the busy life of his neighborhood, was more industrious than the smith. He began his work early in the morning, perhaps by five o'clock in summer, making stock against his daily or other needs. He fashioned horse-shoes from the bar, made his own nails, bolts, nuts, spikes, and the other articles since standardized on machines. No piece of iron or steel, however small or apparently useless, was cast aside if malleable, because all were material for his bellows, anvil, hammer, and strong right arm. If cast-off articles were brought to him for making over he did his work with whatever skill he possessed, separating or uniting, as the arcana of his craft permitted; if it was a superfluity in the hands of owner, finder, or collector, he would take it in payment for work, or even in the time of severe money stringency would pay for it in cash.

A thousand miles from an ore-bank, or a rolling-mill, nothing that could be shaped on the anvil must be lost or neglected; he would turn all these to the most curious account whether for his customer or himself. He would fashion an old scythe into a corn-cutter (just the right thing in weight or quality); make a wornout file into a butcher knife; transform the steel in a heavy awkward hoe into something light, fitted to the touch of man or boy (it sometimes seemed that he had a peculiar genius for

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making life easier for the growing lad who was hard pressed with work and premature responsibilities); or by a touch little short of magical, he would turn into a thing of use and beauty a ploughshare that some faraway workman had bungled.

No man in any Pioneer category was more really trusted than the blacksmith. His nature united with his trade to make him as nearly strictly honest as men can be. Other men, the carpenter, the shoemaker, the weaver, the tinker, or the storekeeper, might be suspect, and the customer could go somewhere else; but the blacksmith was the destined monopolist of a neighborhood, so that while he held his place there was little chance to question his position or his probity. While seldom a leader in matters of high public import, he was knowing to everything that was going on.

Taken all in all, the blacksmith was a fine figure in the Pioneer life, as indeed he had been in his association with the yeoman during the preceding five hundred years. His character and its peculiar traits have been overlaid, though it is not possible even under the lava-like inclusions of the factory system entirely to hide him from view.

If I may seem to have lingered over this peculiar figure it is because he represented in himself the traditions and achievements of the smith from the days when he was limned by Homer down through medieval times and into modern literature, and because by reason of his intrinsic character he belonged to an age that has now departed forever.

## The Place of the Carpenter

To this day, after more than two generations of men in many countries have passed before my eyes, I never see or hear in any part of the world a village blacksmith shop (now no more than a shadow of what it once was) that I do not either recall in memory the many members of this craft whom I knew as a boy, or, if time permits, do not stop to chat or to hear the music of the hammer and anvil and see the sparks fly.

### THE PLACE OF THE CARPENTER

THE carpenter was a less impressive figure. In the first place there was little of mystery about his trade. It was possible to follow every part of his material from the great tree as it stood in the forest, until it took new shapes under the operation of the sawmill, the broadaxe, or the adze, or when it finally found its way to his bench for manipulation, under the square, with handsaw, plane, "drawshave", chisel, or hatchet.

Carpentering was, comparatively speaking, an easy trade to learn, and being in universal demand its votaries were large in number. It was, more often than others, an inherited trade so that the boy could the easier pick it up from the father. Then, it so divided itself that an ingenious father inclined to break into the jack-of-all-trades class, could learn to do some part of the work expected from the carpenter.

In the early days, too, the carpenter was often a farmer in fact and an artisan only by necessity or upon call. He did not wholly segregate himself from his fellows either

## Pioneer Foundations

by the nature of his work or by his place in the community, and hence he did not stand out as a man apart. In truth, the Pioneer life did not lend itself with conspicuous success to the higher development of this trade. Everything was too rude; there was such an absence of architectural form, happily even of pretension, that little opportunity was afforded for much effort outside that of the ordinary slop-shop order. The doors and windows were rude with little, after the earliest days had passed, to distinguish them from each other, whether they went into the largest frame house, itself attractive in size and design, or into the humblest log cabin. The carpenter class was, therefore, inclined to be migratory, ill-trained, subject to fitful employment, somewhat boisterous in habit and not on a level with the leaders of the average new community.

### THE CABINETMAKER AND THE COOPER

ANOTHER worker in wood, small in numbers but always having in him the potentialities of the artist, was the cabinetmaker. The number was small because the demand for furniture other than that of the plainest order was limited and grew slowly. This was one of those slow-working trades where quality was always more important than quantity, with too few men engaged to enable it to lend itself to distinct characterization; but whatever articles they made, its votaries worked only in fine woods and with delicate tools. As the ordinary products disappeared the fashions of the time required the use of mahogany and rosewood, and yet it may well be a question whether with-

## The Cabinetmaker and the Cooper

in the area under study there now remain any considerable number of the prized household articles of the time. Other than as an item in an exhibit the old four-poster bed is as dead as the Caesars, the elaborate cupboards would fit only in museums, the chests would now be considered as antiquated as the furniture of the ancients and have disappeared as kindling, while the walls and wainscoting which in an older and more fortunate time the makers would have fashioned were never thought of and so did not come into existence. Another historic trade was thus driven out of the world — this time by automatic planers and gigantic glue pots, mainly employed to turn out cheap articles with little more character than an angleworm or hideous imitations of periods when art really meant something.

The cooper was present but his function was never important. He had awaiting him in white oak for staves and heads and hickory for hoops the most perfect of materials; but, as few products took a liquid form there was not much for him to do. Before the days of cider, vinegar was imported from great distances, as were all the intoxicants used. The occasional cooper who made his way into this unfriendly environment turned to his trade mostly for odd jobs, thus really merging himself gradually into the class of real farmers. From the occasional representatives of the calling for which he had been trained the cooper was a man much 'like the wheelwright: sober, steady, well-equipped for his work, but less active than other artisans in the life of the day owing to the casual nature of his employment.

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It must not be overlooked that the development of a people scattered over so large an area would be uneven. When the older communities were fairly under way in all the varieties of employment, those in the newer or outlying districts would still be backward. Thus, a trade like that of the cooper might count for almost nothing in the latter while attaining a considerable growth in the former where orchards and breweries and even small vineyards had reached a primitive stage of development. In minor industries it is, therefore, fair to decry generalization which true, at the beginning of even so short a period as ours, might be incorrect at the end of it, or even in its middle term.

It is only possible to set forth conditions as they actually were at some given time, with the knowledge that these existed in every section and practically in every county of the Pioneer area at a like stage of development. There was so much uniformity everywhere in the qualities bestowed by nature that blessings, like grain in a well-sown field, had been scattered so evenly that there is probably no other State in the galaxy where the early conditions, or even those now to be found, lent themselves with greater safety to general conclusions. This applied to land, people, industries, religion, education, and all the elements and forces entering into its life.

### THE ART OF THE WHEELWRIGHT

THE old-fashioned custom wheelwright went out of existence about the middle of the period under study. Until

## The Art of the Wheelwright

modern transportation facilities reached the area of settlement, he still found or made a place. He lived in the midst of as fine materials as were ever available for his particular work : the best quality of white oak, ash, hickory, and elm; the woods best adapted for his purposes. He made excellent vehicles and introduced especially the luxury known as the democrat wagon, a modification, as a light pleasure runabout, of the old English brake or carry-all. It would hold about six adults, and was so strong that further room was available for an uncertain number of children. Hickory spokes, elm or ash hubs, and oak felloes gave it a strength and lightness that had been unattainable hitherto in vehicles of like carrying capacity. The wheelwright thus became a high order of carpenter, his trade having originally grown out of the larger and older one. It had many of the possibilities of artistic design as well as of increased utility and comfort.

During the later period of his regime the wheelwright delayed his exit by making sleds, and especially sleighs of the lighter order, always having among other ambitions one that led him to make a one-horse frame cutter wholly of wood, a thing of beauty, turned out complete with iron shod runners, ready for effective use, and less than a hundred pounds in weight. As population grew and with it a demand for other than mere utility, he made the various kinds of carriages in use elsewhere, always excepting those requiring a driver outside. The management of horses was too much of a pleasure to be given over at any time to a hired man, or even to anybody except the farmer himself

## Pioneer Foundations

or his boys and girls. The wheelwright in his more common name of wagon maker began in his later days to supply the one-seated buggy, perhaps the one vehicle most popular as well as most useful in the history of the Pioneer farmer, doctor, clergyman, indeed all classes of population. No boy verging on manhood, if a member of a prosperous family, was content to be without his own narrow-seated buggy, which was considered a feature inseparable from a courtship or even from a flirtation.

But the wheelwright was doomed as a separate force. Organized machine industry early took up his task and, as demand exceeded his capacity to supply, the central factory superseded him. When this demand became coincident with the increase of transportation facilities, it was not long before the wonderful raw materials which he had discovered and used were utilized in the new towns of the older West: South Bend, Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee, Moline — predestined to become Pioneers in the original vehicle industry — were soon household names. They did not make a better product than that of the village wheelwright, but, by the use of machinery and the advantages incident to production on a larger scale they were able so to reduce prices as to command the trade. The old, old story that had been under the telling during the hundred years or more of the so-called Industrial Revolution was repeated within the shadow of the factory and marked the disappearance of the useful and picturesque figure of another artisan who had so long done the world a service. For the future, his trade while it remained at all became



## The Character of the Miller

a matter of repairs done by the carpenter and the blacksmith working in collaboration.

### THE CHARACTER OF THE MILLER

ANOTHER interesting character was the miller. There was more of mystery about him than could exist in the blacksmith or any other artisan. In the first place, as considerable capital was required the working miller was generally a hired man, the agent or representative of an owner in the form of a company or at least of a man who seldom knew the technique of the business. Mills, whether grist or saw, were the only factories in the neighborhood or district; if both existed, they were often under a common ownership or control, so that their managers never became individuals to the degree that was inevitable in the personal trades where no intermediary was possible.

To the spectator, unfamiliar with the miller's work, his passed for a lazy sort of business. He had only to take in the grain brought to him by a large number or variety of customers, keep all the bags or barrels separate, after taking out his legal toll, put one grist after another into the hopper, see to it that his power was ready and kept in order, pull the lever controlling the water from the race or stream, and then wait with patience until one batch after another was ground. The customer, perhaps waiting nervously to get flour for the family dinner, or the boy loitering about or fishing above or below the dam or in the mill-race or exploring the mysteries of machinery so new to him thought this a simple job; but those who knew

## Pioneer Foundations

how many things the miller had to do, the irregular but heavy weights he had to lift, the help he had to give in so many directions, realized that here was no easy task.

The miller was not, generally speaking, a positive character like his fellow craftsmen in other trades. In his hours of ease he was inclined to the garrulity that was denied him when the noise of his machinery was a discourager of conversation; but, unlike the blacksmith he was not much given to settling the great contentions of theology or the motions of the universe. He was more likely, by reason of his desire to please, to belong to the yes-yes order of men: to assent rather than to discuss or deny, to take things as he found them rather than (in anticipation of the modern so-called uplifter) to raise every question to the awful dignity of a problem.

He was paid by tolls, fixed by law and collected by him before the grain was ground. As seems to be true in the cases where payment is thus made, he was generally half suspected of exacting more than his due; but attested instances of the truth of this accusation were rare. His business came to him in such dribblets that his rewards had also to be collected in the same way. His permitted rate of toll was the same whether a boy brought him a bushel of grain or a distant customer came with a ton. Among these small patrons there were many inclined to be critical, if not unjust.

In the earliest days custom came to a gristmill from long distances, not seldom from sixty miles away. Before the multiplicity of mills, which were dependent upon a friendly

## The Character of the Miller

stream for power, there were few of them. One man would draw to the mill as large a load as the roads would permit, made up of contributions from several neighbors, some other making the next trip for the same purpose. Coming from every direction and often meeting remote from a village at the mill, it would be surrounded for days with campers, each awaiting his turn, all impatient to get back to a neighborhood often not too well supplied with bread. This was additional to his regular custom which could not be favored until all ahead were served. The miller was, therefore, often in a quandary how to meet the most emergent demands so that, taken in connection with the uncertainty of water (often waiting for it to accumulate) the necessity for sharpening the burrs from time to time, the poor quality or bad condition of much of the grain offered, his lot was not one of unalloyed happiness.

Out of the very necessity of his calling, he had to be fairly considerate of many human elements. Among other things it was common to put a half bag of grain in front of a small boy, perhaps not more than ten years old, mount him on a bare-backed horse, chosen for his supposed gentleness, and start them off to the mill perhaps miles away. Everything would go well until the boy nodded or stared at something, or the horse shied, when down would come the limp bundle often into the mud or snow. In such a case there was nothing for the crying boy to do but to sit down and wait for some passing or meeting traveler to raise the load, set him again on the horse—the chance being that a like mishap might recur before he had gone

## Pioneer Foundations

another mile. Out of this old custom, evolved during the long Pioneer settlement of this country, grew the proverb about sending a boy to mill—a homely saying often applied to worldly affairs recklessly entrusted to incapable persons.

It must be confessed that the flour made by the miller in early days was not generally distinguished for its fine or uniform quality. Much of the grain handled had been badly harvested, worse threshed and cleaned, and ill-cared for. The straw would fall to the ground, perhaps before the ripening process in the berry was complete, and might be still further neglected until it had suffered injury. Then it would often be left in sacks in a damp condition so that it could not dry out and regain its natural condition. Even with fairly good farmers, wheat was often taken to the mill before it was thoroughly seasoned.

Except in the worst cases, the miller could not reject this grain; there were no commercial standards to fix quality: nor did he have any facilities for curing or separation. His toll, whatever its quality or however different its samples might be, generally went into a common bin where it remained while he ground the grain offered to him by customers. The result was that the man who was careful in the quality, harvesting, and care of his grain, and often paid cash instead of toll in kind, was likely as his grist was ground separately to get a fair quality of flour, while the careless customer got just what his indifferent grain produced. And the third man who bought flour from the miller obtained a product compounded of the odds and ends

## The Shoemaker and His Last

of grain that had lately passed through the hopper. The stones were not always kept in prime condition, especially when in times of stress the temptation was strong to neglect them.

This defective period did not survive the advent of transportation facilities, and it was really a fortunate thing for all Pioneer communities when, in the increase of population, the somewhat primitive mill was eliminated by improved methods. The old-fashioned gristmill fitted fairly well into simple conditions of society, but like many others for a people who had certainly earned and prayed for their daily bread and were entitled to have it wholesome in quality, its departure brought no cause for mourning.

### THE SHOEMAKER AND HIS LAST

By 1855 the old-fashioned shoemaker had lost both historical and industrial importance. He still survived in name but mainly as a cobbler. By the time mentioned high boots, made mainly in Massachusetts factories, were worn by all, from boys of five to greybeards, while shoes were limited to girls and women and the youngest of children. Nearly all were of a coarse quality — heavy, as was necessary in the mud, snow, and rain, and for timber and brush, and the hard work incident to all employments. In prosperous families most of the members had shoes or lighter boots for Sunday, or for visiting or travel; but they lasted for a long time and little opportunity was afforded for their use, except for the purposes indicated. Slippers made of a coarse carpet stuff came into use during the War, along

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with other luxuries hitherto absent. Now and again a superior shoemaker, a survival from a time when there was a market for his products, would make his way into a rural neighborhood where he flourished somewhat illy; but, in general, such a workman would limit his activities to the county seat towns where, in a courageous way, he would resist with shifting success the inroads of the inferior product from the distant factory with its then rude machinery and imperfect or stiff and badly-fitting product. Gradually, however, in these remote districts the shoemaker, typical in all ages of skill for industry, constant talk, and a tendency to radical views on all questions of human interest, lost his place in the economic structure and was left with only fugitive employment other than as the mender of worn or broken footwear.

### DECLINING HISTORIC TRADES

MANY of the historic trades had either entirely disappeared or lost their importance in the course of migration and settlement. Perhaps the first of these actually to vanish was the hatter who measured the head of each customer as the shoemaker did the foot. He was practically unknown by the middle of our period, and at its close his shop, like himself, would have been an anachronism. And yet, only a few years before he had been conspicuous both in his character and idiosyncracies and in his trade itself. He was another sacrifice thrown to the ever advancing wolf of machinery.

Other trades found no workers because there were no

## High Order of Mechanical Skill

customers for their product : home brewing had been lost, and neither its product nor that of a private still would have been permitted in the face of the strong "temperance" sentiment of the day. The former had to await the increase in foreigners, mainly Germans, while the drinking habits of the day were gratified by the importation of the worst of liquors from comparatively large distilleries in older or neighboring States.

The baker had been eliminated and only began slowly to creep back into the larger towns when the War was nearly over. Among others, this time marked the disappearance of the neighborhood jeweller who made some of the products he sold; the tailor who was hid away, now and then, in the country town where he fashioned a Prince Albert coat for the professional man, the rising farmer, or the adolescent boy whose interest in girls had just risen into evidence. Until about 1865 the functions of the barber were given over to grandmothers to whom, upon death or removal, mothers became successors both in the course of nature and as the result of careful training.

### *A HIGH ORDER OF MECHANICAL SKILL*

CLOSELY related to these trades and inseparable from them was the mechanical skill inherent in the great body of settlers. There were so many articles that could not be bought for the double reason that they could not be found in the market and there was no money to pay for them. Versatility became a necessity.

If an axe handle was needed somebody in the neighbor-

## Pioneer Foundations

hood had to make it. To do this generally lay out of the way of the carpenter, the wheelwright, or the cabinetmaker; so it remained for some man, familiar with the axe, to become an expert in fashioning this particular article. Generally speaking, this man was a farmer who was also a woodman. He thus drew from his own woods the chosen material with a care that was characteristic and executed his task with a skill that could not be surpassed. It required the choicest of hickory, first split into a square, large enough for two or four handles, then hewn into rough shape with the axe or the adze and ripped by a handsaw into sizes for the individual articles. After it was still further roughly shaped with a hatchet and then with a plane on a workbench and by the draw-shave until when it neared completion it was finished with a large very sharp pocket-knife, English made, remaining only to be smoothed with broken glass and polished with various grades of sand and emery paper from coarse to the finest until it shone almost like ivory, oiled, and then so seasoned before the fire that it lost none of its straightness or flexibility. No pattern was used in these various stages of progress: the maker must know to a nicety every curve and line, and be sure that when inserted in the axe it would balance to perfection.

The making of a whipstock from the same fine variety of wood required skill and art. The long slim piece of wood ranging from three to eight feet in length, balanced for carrying a whiplash, ranging from six to twenty feet long according to its uses, had to be so strong and flexible as to respond to every motion whether it was used in the



## High Order of Mechanical Skill

driving of a spirited four-horse team, or eight or ten yoke of oxen in front of a breaking plough on the virgin prairie, or as a drover guiding from the back of a horse a herd of refractory cattle. The fashioning of a wooden ramrod for a squirrel rifle, whether from hickory or white oak, was another delicate process.

The plaiting of a whip of the order that fitted the handles already described was scarcely less difficult. Beginning in a simple way with four strands of leather, generally buckskin, calfskin, or sheepskin, though sometimes dogskin, the skilled whip maker would so practice his art that he ran up to as many as twelve putting the bulge at just the right place to balance it both in itself and for its uses. As much pride was taken in this as could have been found in some achievement, much more talked about but probably less useful or important. The skins of the few fur-bearing animals were dressed for use in making mittens, rugs, lap robes, and other articles for use or ornament.

These accomplishments and many more of a mechanical sort carried out with simple tools, though with the best available materials, executed with a patience that was monumental and a skill that could be learned but not taught, belonged to the best farmers in every considerable neighborhood throughout the whole of the Pioneer area. They were passed on from father to son without loss of skill or efficiency and became part of the mental and industrial outfit of the community.

This comprehensive personal knowledge of a variety of trades (only a few of the articles thus produced have been

## Pioneer Foundations

mentioned) gave the farmboy an insight into many forms of useful work outside his nominal occupation as farmer. Besides training him in the making of things intended for immediate use he was ready, if he cared to learn a trade, to take it up with every advantage that such knowledge, discipline, and confidence could bring him. Such a boy often grew up under a father who tanned the skins of animals into leather for making or mending harness, fittings for saddles, belts for threshing machines or mills, or material for whips, gloves, mittens, and like articles; he would see wagons and sleds repaired and, in many cases, the latter were made; many of the operations naturally belonging to the carpenter would be carried on before his eyes by his father and other farmers such as laying shingles or lathing a room — or, as a sideline, plastering it — or the making of mortises and tenons for house or barn frames or the pins for holding them together; the setting up and the running of farm machinery accustomed him to simple mechanics; he would learn how to utilize the bark of trees, now for whips, again for making ink — in short, except in iron or steel, almost nothing in industry was alien to him. The better the farmer, the more grain he raised from the best tended fields, the better he knew, for his own or neighborly purposes, the essentials of everything that made him of service to himself and to society.

Interest in work did not stop at this general knowledge of it; but all participated in it. Everybody, except the incorrigibly lazy and idle doomed to crime or uselessness, if strong and well was expected to support himself and

## High Order of Mechanical Skill

thus to contribute to the general stock. The keeping of a garden was universal and neither men, women, nor children thought themselves exempt from its making and cultivation. Probably the majority of the children, born on high-class Pioneer farms, whether boys or girls, had paid back to their parents and the world every possible penny of their actual money cost before they were sixteen years old and, in many cases, especially during the Civil War, at least one or two years earlier. The work was not considered child labor, in the sense it has now assumed in the hands of many sentimentalists, a few agitators, and some task-masters. It was a part of the general scheme, assumed to be as necessary to the making of men and women as it was to come into the world at all, and the better the family the more keenly its heads felt their responsibilities to society and to themselves and their children, the more effective was this rigid training.

If the growing boy was routed out of bed early in the morning, either by inclination or insistence, he sought it with the same relative earliness at night, so that probably no class of children anywhere were better provided with sleep during their years of rapid growth. It was not subject to interference by the looseness of methods or the outside attractions now the incident of urban life. Food was plentiful, wholesome though somewhat rich, mostly well cooked and in only a few cases was there exception.

The Pioneer farmer was seldom a slave driver except for himself; the very interest in the work of those engaged in it sometimes led to over exertion. Owing to the extreme

## Pioneer Foundations

heat, the hours were early and late; but there were many interruptions for rest : much thoughtful care for man and beast. There was some let-up in winter, less in hours than in intensity; but the work impulse was never allowed to sleep; that which the bounteous summer had produced, the cold, sterile winter must use, foster, or preserve. It was never a season of lethargy, of bear-like living on accumulated fat; but, as will be seen later, there was a constant study of conditions and an effort to learn how best to utilize or improve them.

In the Pioneer theology not much attention was paid to mortal sins as taught by the Mother Church; in fact, however, there was one of their own — laziness. Everything else could be expiated and forgiven, but nothing could overcome this weakness. Ill health might excuse the inability to work like other people, but only the confirmed invalid, the idiot, and the old who had done a full share were exempt. An active people might accept, in theory, the idea that work was a curse, but every act showed that they both felt and knew it to be the most exalted of blessings.

### THE COUNTRY STORE

FROM the James, the Delaware, and the Merrimac westward over the domain conquered by the Pioneer, the village storekeeper has been an outstanding figure. Drawn from the yeoman class — as distinctly part of it as if his life had been passed between plough handles rather than behind his rude counter — he has carried with him the same honesty, shrewdness, and character that distinguished his

## The Country Store

origin. Where no market existed, he made it; where no credit was, he created it; where either barter or cash could be used, there he went, little changed from his original prototype far towards the rising sun. Distinctly American in origin, blood, and sentiment, he stood as the representative of enterprise, always beginning in a small way but with the same qualities in and behind him that were needed in the simple community of which he was a part. He laid out its villages, promoted within the limits of his ability the budding projects of his little neighborhood; waited, often in vain, for their fruition; adjusted himself to the lack of transportation facilities; watched and longed for better in the face of the knowledge that it meant either his injury or the removal to other fields, if by any chance the railroad should pass him by; in a word, he was accommodating, hard-working, and seldom over prosperous.

The storekeeper marched with the earliest settlers. Swarming from a sparse population in a neighboring State or the older districts because he felt that, small as the number of competitors was, they were already too thick on the ground; drawn like his neighbors by hope, he moved with the movers, carried with him his small stock of goods, dry and wet; and, knowing what his customers would want, when settlers came he was ready to sell or exchange what he had or could get, to buy what was offered, and to take his risk of finding a market. The men who had not been so forehanded as to carry their own supplies with them could get from him on credit seed and the smaller ready-made tools or implements then procurable, groceries, cali-

## Pioneer Foundations

coes, and the absolute necessities of life to enable them to carry on until a crop, however meagre, could be raised. He would buy the extra woolen socks or mittens that in her scanty leisure the housewife knitted, or the spare eggs or chickens or preserves or pickles she might have, paying the going prices in trade. He thus kept the wheels of business turning. His activity was small, but in its essence it was part of the growing commerce of a restless people. If a settler came along and wanted work his store was the free employment agency between farmer and hired man.

He did not keep a livery stable but he knew where to find a driver for a seeking traveler : in short, he was the man-of-all-work of a neighborhood, good natured and kindly in himself as well as in the necessity of his occupation, acquainted with every farmboy or school girl within his jurisdiction, often the universal "uncle" of the village, and, though seldom the most intelligent man in the neighborhood, was interested honestly in its schools, churches, and simple social functions.

His store was the universal magnet, less attractive to the young or to those theologically inclined than the blacksmith shop, but more frequented, more comprehensive, more inclusive of rich and poor, resident and traveler. He knew that if he met the demands of his neighborhood and did his part faithfully, he would not have a rival within any time that he could foresee; he recognized that if he became neglectful in attention, stock, or general interest, or overlooked public or private duties, he would be pushed out by another.

## The Storekeeper's All-round Work

As a rule, with little regard to the vicious customs of party politics, the country store was also the post office, the importance of which as a center is now beyond understanding. For the majority of the population waiting for the mail was always an event, and going for it was one of the life interests of the remainder. In spite of their hard and exacting labors, letter writing to folk left behind them was not overlooked, while the weekly newspaper taken by probably one-half the families was scarcely less attractive or important as a force in the home.

### *THE STOREKEEPER'S ALL-ROUND WORK*

As the storekeeper had to accept trade for much of his goods he was compelled to know something of many things, and in order to attain such knowledge he had to keep in close touch with them. He sometimes took grain, livestock, a share in growing crops where no lien or mortgage would be really effective. He had little to rely upon except common honesty and his own judgment as to both produce and men. He had to seek and find customers or markets and then to see to it that these miscellaneous goods were started on their way to the distant consumer. Sometimes there would be a demand for some proportion of these articles in the neighboring larger town, if one existed within reach; if not, he must organize his own systems of transport. While the Mississippi River towns were the principal magnets, because they opened a door to the outside world, the storekeeper could procure men who during the early days of winter would drive to them and carry his goods,

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probably if money was scarce taking their pay throughout the next year in staple articles from his shelves. They would carry back his stock purchases, made through factors, or in some cases by these temporary teamsters themselves, thus giving both him and the neighboring farmer who would make one round trip of this kind each year a fairly remunerative job judged by the economic standards then current.

The process known as "Jewing down" which, although practiced by both traders and people who had probably never heard of a Jew still less seen one, was universal. No storekeeper expected to buy produce at his first offer or to obtain the price marked on dry goods or groceries. There was a contest on both sides and both often believed that they had the better of the bargain. Staple articles, like sugar, coffee, tea, rice, and tobacco, had pretty generally a fixed price, but even in these the dickering habit was often stronger than custom and the same disagreement would result. Often postage stamps would alone escape from this process. When buyers were already carried on the storekeeper's simple books of account, or when there was any question of solvency or delay, no abatements in price would be made; but cash down would generally bring concessions. This was once so common that it hardly deserves mention as a distinctive Pioneer method, but its use in such remote districts only attests its universality.

It was only natural that the storekeeper should have many debtors. However cautious he might be he could not avoid the making of an undue share of doubtful ac-



## The Storekeeper's All-round Work

counts. He had to deal with the average share of dishonest and scheming persons, with those known as the doless or the "ornery", with the careless and indifferent. In addition, there were the migratory here to-day and gone to-morrow, so that with them all he had to be full of watchfulness if he was to avoid imposition and robbery. Living in the days before exemption and homestead laws had become so liberal, he must keep in touch with the constable or the squire so that at first warning of danger he could levy on a hog, a calf, a yearling, or a crib of corn. In many cases in the absence of competitive bidders these articles would be bought in by the creditor at a low price, although, generally speaking, he only wanted the amount of his debt and his costs.

With an occasional exception the storekeeper was not a hard Shylock-order of man; he was not so inclined by nature and it was to his interest to have the good will of his neighborhood — public opinion holding quite as large a place in his success as capital or goods. More than any other man in the Pioneer life, he was inclined to be, as the seller in a small community must be — and that, too, in spite of the old Latin saw, *caveat emptor* — all things to all men. His prosperity either depended upon this, or he thought it did, with the same effect in either case.

As he handled more actual money than others, the storekeeper was always thought to be better off than he really was, or with his narrow opportunities could be. After all he lived in the day of small things and was enmeshed in them. There was not much chance for that romance of

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trade, so much emphasized by the English. In the dialect of his day he had to stick to his knitting; if he was watchful, diligent, and provident he got ahead, just like his neighbors, but his lot was the same; he and his family belonged to the types about them; lived in the same class of houses; indulged themselves in similar activities, and he was in no wise different from his general surroundings, except that his limitations gave him less rather than more personal influence in the community in which he had chosen to live.

### *SOME IMPRESSIONS CORRECTED*

It would not be fair to close even this outline study of the storekeeper without a reference to the charge so often made against his class, that is, the sale of liquors. The earliest of them were almost compelled to sell "wet goods". The drinking of a rude, entirely bad, sort of whisky was almost universal with certain types of settlers. Common in the morning and still more common at night, in early days it was the accompaniment of social gatherings, even weddings and funerals; it was passed around at the house-raising or the log-rolling, in the harvest field, or at the threshing. It was supposed to be a specific for snake-bites and either to prevent or to cure malaria. Somebody had to handle a product in such general demand and as there were few taverns, almost of necessity the trade in this as in other articles in common use fell into the hands of the storekeeper. He did not sell by the dram or for drinking on the premises, seldom even by the bottle, but by the jug,

## Some Impressions Corrected

the demijohn, or the keg, filled in the presence of the customer directly from the barrel in quarts or larger quantities.

Drinking — except that which always goes on in solitary fashion — was social, in the circle of men accustomed to come together for enjoyment, or business, within the limits already defined. The abuse of the habit during the Pioneer days has been greatly exaggerated; any person with smallest intelligence by giving a moment's thought to the question would know historically as he would in its presence that the great wilderness from the Atlantic to the Wabash, and the greater prairie beyond, were not conquered by a race of persistent, irredeemable drunkards.

As men progressed into the time and place under study, drinking habits changed and the storekeeper changed with them. As a man of standing in his community, dependent upon its good will, he had neither the desire nor the power to run counter to public sentiment, so that, in general, he refused longer to handle alcoholic products. In due time, the saloon or doggery, as it was generally called, crept in. Now and then a storekeeper would persist in the traffic, and as the temperance sentiment rose higher and higher, and after ample warning, the bungs of his barrels were sometimes knocked in, or their heads forced out, and his stock in the absence of a gutter ran down the village street.

On the whole the country store was the prototype, in a small way, of the great emporium (if a high sounding advertising word may be used) now become so universal in all centers. Its business was not only similar, but its keeper himself reminds the student that eliminating the

## Pioneer Foundations

differences between rude times and those in which numbers and organization prevail the men themselves, separated by many years and much history, belonged to the same sturdy type. In fact, many of the earlier men lived into the period when, seeking scope and opportunity, they themselves became the Pioneers on larger scenes in catering to the wants of their fellowmen and so passed out of the category of storekeeper into the more pretentious one of merchant. It is only within a generation that the general store has fallen into the hands of men of foreign origin, and then only because the type who originated the idea, and long carried it out, found something better to do. The later proprietors or managers are, in their turn, only imitators of the purely American stock to which belonged the country storekeeper, and from whom in all cities from the metropolis downward was extended the area of their experience and ability.

*ESSENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF INDUSTRY*



*CHANGES IN FORMS OF PROPERTY*

IN the matter of occupation, as in all the other material features of the Pioneer life, it is impossible to escape from the influence of a society with a single dominating interest — agriculture. No other as known to our period came into the account. Every mechanical trade, whatever its rank, was a sprout from this overmastering one : its followers were only servants or auxiliaries of the tiller of the soil. In itself, it seems simple : the outward expression of the activities of a people struggling in the face of hardships and isolation to conquer a continent. Its population had only the resource of drawing out the land which existed in painful superfluity. This task it undertook with quiet resolution and astounding confidence. It seemed to be thinking of a single object : this subduing of the earth; but its vision, supposed to be narrow, was in reality comprehensive and gave it that larger view of human development which recognized the necessity for variety.

The change in the outward forms of property had already projected itself upon the economic horizon. While the trades grew out of the land as surely as did the vegetation upon which man was dependent, this was not more true than in the case of the shapes taken by these organized artisan industries, all of whose products had this close relation to the land itself and to the needs of those who were slowly bringing it into use. But it is difficult for a

## Pioneer Foundations

generation whose title deeds to property are represented so largely by stocks, bonds, and other scraps of paper, to realize what, during uncounted generations, the earth itself meant to their predecessors; and yet it is only the form, not the substance or the reality, that has changed.

### *THE DESIRE FOR RAILROADS*

THE subsidiary interests, so far as method was apparent, had been scattered. Men had supplied the wants incident to clothing and shelter, and to luxury in food, by devoting extra labor at odd times or often by overexertion of their energies to the ancillary trades; but, much of it was after all drudgery, so that after development had gone on for some generations there was an almost unconquerable desire for that division of labor so long promised. While the Pioneer life contained more than its share of men of solitary or hermit cast of mind the majority never vowed themselves to isolation or monotony. They could live alone and they did; but there was no pretense that they liked it; they missed the company of their fellows; they pined for the city, and, as they could not go to it, they were always scheming to make one for themselves.

It is impossible, now that the railroad has penetrated everywhere, to understand how much it was desired by those so far removed from it that they knew nothing of it. They imagined and planned towns, their farms or villages were to become future great cities, centers of population filled with every variety of industry, factories with machines and products of every kind, and busy people



## The Desire for Railroads

providing markets for the teeming population about them. Every county seat town was to become a railroad and manufacturing center, with all the equipment that could be devised for industrial, educational, and social activity. Rival towns were laid out in the fond hope of defeating disturbing ambitions by diverting to themselves the connections that should make the wilderness blossom as the rose, or turn the open prairie, still strange to the plough, into a busy mart handling all things necessary for human beings.

These budding interior centers (with their commercial mirages) began their imaginary careers long before the railroad had even crept slowly and painfully up to the banks of the Mississippi from fifty to two hundred miles away. The people in each neighborhood united with every other to enact the most liberal of laws for the encouragement and protection of railroads. They mobilized their neighbors; coaxed or dragooned the stingy or conservative into giving rights of way through farms or woods; contributed money to build stations; agreed to intermit taxation over long periods; voted to issue, at a high rate of interest, bonds in aid; levied, under special laws, taxes which they bound themselves to pay; projected factories, intended for making in unlimited supply the most complicated articles; and finally believed that many a place, without existence other than as town lots on the plot made by a local surveyor, was destined, in the course of time, to rival Pittsburgh, or Lynn, or Fall River, by attracting their capital, workshops, and people, thus realizing the age-long dream of bringing producer and consumer, maker and user, together.

## Pioneer Foundations

It mattered little that the terminal of the railroad still lingered far away; that the great central business was only a wagonmaker's shop; that the implement factory was little more than a glorified blacksmith shop; or that the woollen mill closed its doors almost before it had woven the stuff for a girl's dress. Hope remained until the railroad was fairly within hailing distance, when the discovery was made that it charged a rather heavy rate for carrying freight and passengers and that, instead of drawing local factories while it was injuring the far-off establishments, it only extended their markets. Then the community that had been lonesome and remote found that it was only what it had been before and that no magic could make it over. It still indulged the interesting and hopeful anticipations incident to a humdrum life, but its people were almost as isolated as they had been before. It was no more agreeable as disenchantment than this process had been throughout all history or than it would become again. Existence went on just as before, and the fact only gradually became apparent that they must wait patiently to adjust themselves to blessings.

This only indicated that a people, industrious, patient, hospitable to ideas and ideals, had become wearied with the tiresome isolation of the country life. The universality of these ambitions had defeated the general purpose; so that, instead of an infinite series of large towns with widely-distributed industries, catering to distant markets, the country seats scattered through a half million square miles settled down slowly into a monotonous development which

## Hard Conditions to be Overcome

connoted comfortable villages, having the assumed dignity and the paraphernalia of boroughs with titles and officials imitated from great cities. In like manner their once ambitious rivals disappeared from the map gradually but surely and their elaborate paper streets and public squares came again under the plough from which they ought never to have emerged.

### *HARD CONDITIONS TO BE OVERCOME*

BUT these aspirations, unreasoning and pathetic as they seemed and really were, had an influence upon the people who held them. They preserved the spirit of enterprise until their best minds could plunge out into the great world and enlarge their contribution to its expansion. The close of the Civil War period saw the most active and energetic of the young men who had grown up in this atmosphere steadily making their way as devisers, improvers, and inventors wherever work was to be done or rewards to be earned.

But it had an even more direct influence by maintaining interest in their national industries as they emerged from the purely domestic stage and slowly took their places in the ranks of mechanical development. It turned the attention of these people to the importance of machinery in their own work. The petty factory, which now and then found or made a place for itself, was almost less than nothing; it was only a sign, a promise of what might really be done in the great key industry. It was a disappointment, as the failure of small aspirations is likely to be; but it brought

## Pioneer Foundations

to these Pioneer people a knowledge of the wealth inherent in the vast resources which, uncultivated and almost unknown, lay under their feet; it enabled them to take advantage of opportunity. In spite of low prices, markets slowly opened out and began to be remunerative. When the financial and currency conditions promised to become stable and the settlers could count upon getting and having what they earned, the necessary capital was soon in hand or became available as credit extended itself.

Money had been so scarce that in spite of a tireless industry it was the one commodity almost absent. For the first thirty years of our period (1830-60) it was a struggle, even for a well-to-do family, to gather enough ready money to pay taxes and interest charges, and to buy from the world's factories and warehouses the articles made necessary by new tastes and demands. The system of barter, the character which gave credit and value to the individual note of hand often passing from one to another, enabled these people to tide themselves over. Even much of the nominal currency, bad and unredeemed without recourse or prospect, was left in the possession of the unfortunate last holder who had no other notice of default than that received from the latest number of a publication known as the *Bank Detector*.

But gradually the community came to have a surplus and never was anything more carefully husbanded or nurtured. Every economy was practiced outside the boundaries of pure meanness, every nerve was strained, and every dollar emulated the example of its owner in hard work. There

## Absence of a Circulating Medium

was little demand for outside money in a community which raised practically all that it ate; made for itself, either in reality or by simple local exchanges, what it wore; built its own houses with little obligation or thanks to anybody; and had its own transportation system.

### ABSENCE OF A CIRCULATING MEDIUM

IF IT had been wanted or needed, real money or its safe paper representative could not have been commanded in any considerable amount : there was nothing to give as collateral or in security. When the best improved farms were worth no more than ten or fifteen dollars an acre, when contiguous wild lands were purchasable at a third or half these prices, and when great open tracts awaited buyers it was not possible to command on mortgage enough ready money either materially to help the community or to bring ruin to the debtor. There were many enterprising farmers who could have used more capital to their own and the common advantage; but they had to bide their time, which came slowly, almost painfully. The new live-stock market, available as the railroad approached, yielded a small but assured profit. The prices were absurdly low.

In the spring of 1860 within ten miles of the State capital, hogs of the best quality, averaging three hundred pounds or more, sold for two dollars a hundred weight on foot; fat cattle for three or four dollars a hundred; full grown chickens were a drug at three dollars a dozen; turkeys weighing ten or fifteen pounds might sell at Christmas for seventy-five cents or a dollar apiece; eggs sometimes

## Pioneer Foundations

brought eight or ten cents a dozen although they were sold oftener in exchange at the store for five cents; the best butter brought ten or fifteen cents a pound the average not reaching more than the first named; potatoes, when salable at all, might bring ten or fifteen cents a bushel; vegetables could find no buyers because all either raised their own or went without them; while fruit was a thing of the future. Corn was sometimes sold at ten cents a bushel in the crib, and on remote prairies it was burned for fuel; wheat was seldom more than fifty cents a bushel; oats twenty cents; and hay three or four dollars a ton. A farm hand was paid from twelve to fifteen dollars a month and his board, and even at this low wage often had more ready cash than his employer. The laborer did very well when he could get seventy-five cents a day in the regular season, and a dollar during harvest was Dr. Johnson's "wealth beyond the dreams of avarice".

Even at these prices — so striking was the simplicity of the life and the prudence of these people — they soon reached comparative wealth, both as individuals and as communities. A county would often grow within five years from a raw prairie to five or six thousand people pretty evenly distributed over its surface : with comfortable houses and well-stocked barns; school facilities for all comers; recognized, enterprising leaders; boys and girls growing into ambitious and confident citizens and completely organized life. Now and then a panic would come, but to men and women earning their own way each year, having little use for money, ignorant of even the simplest

## Absence of a Circulating Medium

forms of speculation, believing that they were doing God's service, devoted to their institutions and to lofty ideals, and as the coming Civil War was to show, deeply patriotic, the flurry of the day that brought down many an over-ambitious man elsewhere, passed over these simple people with little addition to the usual or expected burden.

Nothing could more effectually discredit the quantitative theory of currency than the fact that with almost none at all these busy people kept at their work so sedulously that before they knew it they had reached a position of comfort and comparative wealth, ready to develop resources hitherto hidden or neglected and to send forth sons and daughters fitted to give to the country the efficient service that had distinguished their fathers and mothers in distant rural neighborhoods.

Even the Shylock, who lived generally on the edge of every village, sometimes a close-fisted foreign peasant with a genius for accumulation — more often an American of like tastes but superior grabbing power — in either case, a born skinflint — contributed to the result. His money, so highly prized by himself, would enable the more enterprising farmers even after paying for it at usurious rates, to enlarge their facilities for stock growing, or so to develop their natural gifts for trading that they found in themselves an unsuspected capacity for business. Through these features of life as through all others ran the spirit of common helpfulness: coöperation on real, though seldom on outward or professed, lines. These people were little given to talking about uplift or helping their neigh-

## Pioneer Foundations

bors, and had never heard the word altruism; but they were accustomed, both from good will and necessity, to do their duty as it presented itself to them.

The capable young persons trained in this varied life (in reality it was not narrow as so often represented but broad and rounded) men and women alike, who went out everywhere with a discipline which, added to clean blood and good natural parts, enabled them to turn to speculation in scholarship, profession, or industry, and thus to become vital elements in all the progress of the time. They had their weaknesses, woeful and many, some of them inexcusable and dangerous—for after all, with their large share of virtues, they were human in a high degree.

### *THE RESULT OF RAPID CHANGES*

THE summing up of industrial conditions in the Pioneer area only two generations ago presents many difficulties, the principal being that the changes have been so many and striking and so rapid that there is little understanding of the conclusions reached. Recognition of what our people passed through in these recent times seems next to impossible; we can hardly realize how they worked and suffered, succeeded and enjoyed, because to the average thought and imagination, the times are almost as remote as those of Cato the Censor. Perhaps the most striking fact is that so large a proportion of men superior in breeding should not only have accepted the command to work with the body but that it should have been of the most exacting order, requiring the strength of Vulcan and toil



## The Result of Rapid Changes

as unremitting and often scarcely less discouraging than that of Sisyphus.

The muscle to perform this labor was united with a brain power which enabled the man to support himself and his family; to aid in the conquest of nature in her wildest mood; to dream dreams of a regenerated society under American auspices; and, in the individual, prompted religious speculation to attempt the mighty task of piercing into the thoughts and purposes of the Infinite.

It would be impossible to describe the capacity of these men for this physical toil because nothing like it is now known to the life of the world. The men who performed these self-imposed physical tasks were not hirelings, but

Skilled by Freedom an' by gret events  
To pitch new States ez old-world men pitch tents

and the one task never interfered with the other. There was nothing that they either could or would shirk. It seemed that the yeoman, recognizing that his kind had missed its chance in the old world, was determined in the time at his disposal and in the first available place to make up within a few generations while traveling painfully from the Atlantic into the heart of the Mississippi Valley all that had been lost by his forebears. It had required nearly three hundred years to take up this slack, but he had the satisfaction of feeling that he was doing it.

Enough has already been told to reveal the physical stamina that could bear these labor burdens and, in bearing them, overcome so many drawbacks and hindrances.

## Pioneer Foundations

The hours of labor of the Pioneer were long beyond anything conceivable in the industrial conditions of the present day. The more prosperous the farmer, the longer the hours and the more unremitting his own toil and that of his household. In summer, not merely from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, but from the earliest dawn to the latest dusk was he found at his plough, his planting, his mowing, or his harvesting. He must make ready before he went forth, so that on the best farms the average hour of rising, not for the hired man or the eldest son, but for the head of the family, his wife, and all of working age was four o'clock. Often boys began this process at ten and kept it up all the year round without let up, first for their fathers and then for themselves to the end.

In winter the care of stock involved little less of toil and watchfulness than did the seasons of planting, cultivation, harvesting, threshing, garnering, or marketing. The need for vigilance was always pressing. Rainy days were provided with indoor work, long waiting to be done and longer deferred. Saturday offered little change; and even Sundays imposed many necessary tasks, although these were made as few as possible so that other duties, religious in their character, might be performed.

When cultivation was over and the ground locked in frost, often to the depth of three feet or more, there were a thousand things to do; rails to be made and distributed; sawlogs to be cut and hauled; fertilizer to be scattered; grain to be drawn to a market, generally several miles away; wood to be cut and prepared not only for the home and

## The Result of Rapid Changes

the day but for the long summer, and for the schoolhouse, the church, a widow, or a sick or poor neighbor.

Such a farmer often became a nurse at night or sat up with the dead, as was the universal custom, or dug the grave for the coffin made by the roadside carpenter; or performed some other neighborly act. It had to be done and there was no other than he to do it. No money could have hired a substitute even if the wherewithal to pay had been available. It was an individual service and he was the person to do it. No social lines limited such activities; no caste entered into account; some human being, whether worthy or unworthy, needed help and it was forthcoming. The fact that the new country was wholly agricultural served to good purpose by showing that such high character, with its conspicuous determination to do good, was in no way dependent upon calling or social position, and by enabling all however lofty or however humble to understand what was to be done and that they were expected to do it.

It was not necessary to din it into the minds of the young from pulpit or home; if it was there, nothing could kill or eradicate it; if it was not, nothing could create or arouse it. It existed in both sexes, and however virtuous it may have been in motive or effective in application no boast was made of it, no claim to rewards in this world or the next was predicated upon it. But it was a real addition to that ceaseless toil from which the self-respecting and the successful and the unconscious makers of empire were never exempt.

## Pioneer Foundations

### WHERE INHERENT CHARACTER COUNTED

It would be mere guesswork even to estimate the proportion which these men bore to the whole as it was constantly changing with the new accessions made year by year. It would perhaps be safe to assume that during the first generations real leaders of a neighborhood or series of neighborhoods in a given county would settle in them within ten years after official organization. Within even that short period local traditions would have grown up. The best lands had been discovered and found their way into the hands of the more enterprising. Within each of the counties so settled, perhaps from five to twenty farmers, models for their time, would have distributed themselves and curiously enough they were scattered, not massed, as if, indeed, some principle had dictated their choice of a place where they would be ever-present as examples to their fellows — and yet never so widely separated as to make meeting and the formal and informal study of conditions or prospects either difficult or impossible.

By this time such men had fair-sized holdings, generally 160 acres of the best land and a small woodlot. Their ploughing was of the deepest, their crops were planted by the right day, when weather permitted, and were cultivated with care; their fences were always standing; their houses were kept well-painted and in good repair; the water supply was convenient and ample; their barns were the best they could use or afford; they had the best stock that the time provided; their wives were the best housekeepers; their children the most industrious at home and the most studious

## Where Inherent Character Counted

at school; and their work, both outside and inside, was done with due regard to practical neatness and effectiveness.

It is scarcely appreciated now, when government is attempting to do so many things, what these men both singly and in union (because what one learned was the property of all) did for scientific agriculture and stock raising. The search for new seeds or varieties of plants or fruits; their trial or selection on their own farms, their distribution whensoever obtained, their liberality in giving their knowledge as well as their facilities to neighbors, tenants, or newcomers, made each of these centers an experiment station long before government either thought of the idea or gave it a name. These men were self-taught, but they were intended by nature to be teachers (much of their instruction being of the order known in education as kindergarten) which, after all, is only an illustration of the old saw that seeing is believing. They gave their lessons without fee, reward, or expectation.

Perhaps, at the same stage of growth there would be others of the same general class but younger and willing to learn the best and both ready and able to assimilate it. After ten years the two together, if conditions were fairly favorable, might number twenty or twenty-five for the whole county and into the hands of these few would fall the higher work of these separate congeries of communities and the fixing of their character during the years to come. It will be noted that these representatives constituted only an insignificant proportion of the whole, perhaps an average of one out of each two or three hundred of the men act-

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ually owning and cultivating lands within these county areas. The men in question had not only learned their business and made themselves expert in it but they were in love with it and so kept themselves in touch with every avenue or lane down which knowledge might pass. Thus they took advantage of all available improvements in method and machinery.

Much is heard about the facility with which the American manufacturer scraps antiquated machinery; but, in this as in so many other things, he is only doing what he learned from his enterprising father on the farm upon which, generally speaking, he worked as a boy. These men were not the friends or advocates of agricultural colleges, looking upon them as another artificial road to the making of more half-baked, ill-trained preachers, lawyers, or doctors. It was long before this prejudice was even modified, much less removed. Whatever the merit of this opinion they are really both the Pioneers and the models so far as good farming in the Middle West has obtained any hold and deserve a measure of credit which, often forgotten or overlooked, cannot be exaggerated.

If these men and women had boasted of their own efficiency, or anybody else had suggested it, they would have ridiculed and resented such a claim. All that they did or attempted was for them a part of the day's work : it was to be done, it was a duty, and they were there to do it. No question of hours was raised in their minds, much less in discussion or as a policy. Problems did not trouble them although they perhaps tried harder to peer into the future

## How Inefficiency Was in Evidence

than is the case even now where every added wave of jealousy and discontent brings its new contingents of Jeremiahs. It was not long before there began to come out of their ranks young men who, scattering into other fields of activity, many new to them in form, exercised their gifts and training to the best account. Their new fields of activity were small, but the rewards of honest effort were ample to meet their needs so that one familiar with them has only had to watch their efforts with the same pride that he had known in those of their fathers and mothers, their grandfathers and their grandmothers.

### HOW INEFFICIENCY WAS IN EVIDENCE

BUT this is the bright side of the shield. The reverse showed an inefficiency, an ignorance, an inability and unwillingness to learn, in a half or three-fourths of the farmers that was astoundingly in contrast. The fertility of the soil, to use a familiar literary figure, was so great that when tickled with a hoe or scratched with a plough it laughed forth a harvest; but it was a thin, meagre harvest, which had come to something, in spite of a lack of cultivation. Its crop, mainly corn, was planted badly and slovenly, cultivated irregularly or not at all, often gathered as needed day by day, or wasted by turning half-starved stock into it, and even when cribbed with some remote respect for system the rats and other vermin had free access to it, while all of it was exposed to weather and decay. The attempt was constant to cultivate two or three times as much land as even a good farmer could have managed, with the result

## Pioneer Foundations

that while the latter would get at least fifty bushels of first quality corn from his plantings, his careless neighbor did well if on an occasional acre he could gather twenty bushels of an indifferent kind with an average even far below this figure.

This hideous inefficiency, with its contributing laziness, produced a quality of farming which on the average and year by year was execrable, discouraging to progress even in the more ambitious and moderately successful class which lay between the exemplars of the two systems. It was the natural outcome of origin, habits as rigid as obstinacy could make them, idleness, lack of ambition, a shiftlessness which was inherent and ineradicable in the very dregs of incompetence, the off-scourings of creation, of which the lowest part of the Pioneer population was composed. If the settlement of this region could have been restricted by some autocratic power (with all their faults the Germans would probably have done so) to the poor, vigorous, well-chosen specimens of creditable men instead of being left to the freedom which our institutions and ideas so wisely provided, while the filling up of given districts or regions might have been delayed, the development of the general character would not have had to wait until in the slow processes of failure and removal the unfit population had carried itself away. If the country, from the Wabash westward, could have been restricted even to the fairly fit it would be impossible to speculate what might have been the result, judging from that which has come with so many unfavorable conditions. If, in other words, in certain parts of the West



## How Inefficiency Was in Evidence

the fit and efficient had not had to carry on their backs the unfit and inefficient, this country would have been different. But as this lament would apply to all the settlement of America it is, of course, as futile to consider it as in the case of all other might-have-beens.

Nothing was to be done or could be done that did not bear the closest relation to the land. There was practically nothing for any man to do, if he joined the moving forces at all, except to start in business for himself, however little he was fitted by training or character for independent work. While the small minority knew their trade, the majority had everything to learn — and never learned any large part of it. In the main, they were ignorant of anything but the driving power of hunger without the energy or knowledge to appease it. There was room for a few hired men, but not enough to provide work for any considerable proportion of those whose first need was discipline and training under the expert, enterprising leaders who were laying the foundations of the new society.

Thrown upon themselves, with no proper outfits for their families, with poor, ill-bred, neglected, often cruelly-treated horses and other animals, implements bad in quality and meagre in quantity, laziness bred idleness and discouragement followed. It resulted in slatternly women, fit companions in distress, redundant, useless children, and a general class of people whose lives were at sixes and sevens : at once their own despair and a hindrance to the energetic and enterprising. It is true that most of them soon began to move on and, after the Civil War, the places

## Pioneer Foundations

of many were gradually taken by an improved type; but the time lost was fatal to the inauguration of that period of high and systematic farming for lack of which the whole country still waits and will long suffer. As in an individual so in a people, the time of regrets will come when mistakes, perhaps unpreventable, must be paid for.

### *FITTING INTO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION*

THIS mass of industry was both individual and coöperative; men worked together, though for themselves; it was never collective, and yet the common interests were never forgotten; as thrift and effort brought savings, these were invested for the most part in the extension of the facilities necessary in their primal calling; but if there was an extra dollar it must cultivate nimbleness because it, too, was expected to work. There were no hidden investments, no miser's hoards. In thirty years of the Pioneer life I never so much as heard of a farmer miser.

Within the period under consideration the branches of industry which, during the whole of human history, had been almost as diffusive as neighborhood or agriculture itself began to become general, to concentrate in favored distant spots, while their organization, conduct, and production took on new forms. The time-honored system of apprenticeship was gradually lost. The woolen mill, the flouring mill, the tannery, the pottery, the wheelwright's shop, the plough maker, the wagon maker, the iron worker, even the blacksmith himself, began to disappear before the eyes of the passing generation.

## Perfection of Physical Training

For two hundred years, these had been, for the most part, adjuncts of the farmer : both associates and servants. Now, new kinds of talents came into use and old orders of skill were gradually but surely lost. The wrench was great everywhere; but with the Pioneer it was more severe than in older societies because at a time when markets were few it threw back upon the land a large number of men, ill-equipped for its purposes, thereby intensifying competition and inefficiency when relief from both was most needed. It was long before adjustment could come : not, indeed, until the men who had laid the foundations of the new society had passed away.

I cannot feel that I have given undue space or attention to the Pioneer industries. Narrow though they seem, being both in form and effect those by which men have subsisted from the earliest days, they were carried on under strange conditions with the aid of institutions new, at least in form, and by men moved by principles and aspirations which such men had never known before. It will remain later to analyze the varied social conditions, and the effect upon this life of revolutionary movements; but none of them could have been understood without a fairly comprehensive study of their industries.

### PERFECTION OF PHYSICAL TRAINING

THE importance or value of the physical training of the Pioneer is not always appreciated. It is a commonplace to eulogize the games of Greece and Rome, or to over-emphasize the sports or athletics of the moderns; but, in

## Pioneer Foundations

the one case as in the other participation was limited to the few by whom skill was acquired mainly with the desire to use the physical accomplishments to command a large measure of applause. With the Pioneer the acquisition of skill in riding, or running, or jumping, or in the handling of animals was the incident of his work — its inevitable accompaniment. His whole life was an embodied natural hardship, more severe than the Spartans with their artificial methods ever so much as thought of. This ran down through his family in all its ramifications. He did not make a show of himself and neglected or flouted everything now supposed to be the essence of sanitary precaution; proceeding through storm or sunshine, through deadening cold, or stifling heat, to use his body for everything of which it was capable; and yet, his life was wholly given over to useful or charitable exertion.

It is not a matter of surprise that when the modern playwright attempts to deal with the strenuous creative life of these times, his ideas and theories fail. This man ought not to be expected to understand the people whose function it was to do things in the face of the perils and difficulties that lie at the very foundations. So, when emphasis is laid upon useless or sinister families, upon material surroundings of which only the sordidness is emphasized, upon living that was poor, upon the slattern and the drunkard, without a thought for the noble qualities that lay beneath, or for the many strata of unselfishness at the base of the character, we know that we are floundering about, so far as real comprehension is concerned among puny men

## The Handicaps for Active Boys

who with their little lifeless poems, their half-dreams or stories dealing with the commonplace, their pretentious novels whose importance is often measured by their number of vacuous readers, and by boasts about a material growth and prosperity whose very foundations are overlooked or forgotten, we know that we are in the wallow of a sea of mediocrity. It is the attempt of one generation to interpret another after it has lost the ability to study or the judgment necessary to understand it.

There is even heard in these later days a note of patronage when dealing with these people. They are represented as ignorant, devoid of sentiment or the ideal and as realizing few of the possibilities that lay about them even as living among the dregs of poverty like unto the degraded creatures found in modern slums, or even in the social outcasts that existed in small numbers among themselves. One may best notice this attitude by quoting the protest of Robert Louis Stevenson about the treatment sometimes meted out to the greatest of modern French painters : "To pity Millet is a piece of arrogance". It is not uncommon to find persons of this order among the popular lecturers of the day, especially those who go about and talk to student or uplift audiences in the neighborhood of some of our universities and colleges.

### THE HANDICAPS FOR ACTIVE BOYS

ONE of the pathetic scenes often enacted in the Pioneer life was of the boy who, with known ability and demonstrated ambition, had to stay on the farm until he had

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passed his majority or even until later. With hard work and with no opportunity to associate with like-minded young persons of either sex, he had before him a difficult task when he finally went out into the world and took up something new which was to occupy him for the rest of his life. Because boys grew naturally and easily into the trade of farming (the most complicated trade known to men) there is no adequate recognition of the struggle when it became necessary to turn to another.

Outside of industry, bodily health, and discipline the new employment bore no technical relation to any other calling. He left behind him everything but the qualities mentioned, and at a time when his mind had lost some of its plasticity he had to devote himself to something wholly new. He had to live in strange surroundings, with associates having different manners, and to meet novel forms of competition to which adjustment was not easy. If he had the power of absorption in his new work and adjusted himself to it he made his way; but at the beginning his progress was slow, the results doubtful; the lack of confidence in himself impeded him at every turn. If it was mechanical, he was handicapped however he might try to overcome his lack of skill and training; if it was intellectual, he needed all his natural ability, energy, and courage to carry him through.

It was the fate of a large proportion of the Pioneer boys to have to overcome these trials, and the wonder is that so many finally triumphed over them. To do so meant that a new education must be acquired at an age when the

## The Handicaps for Active Boys

mind inclines towards rigidity, when habits are more and more difficult of conquest, when associations draw men backward rather than drive them forward. But the story of these forms of simple life is fairly uniform in showing how general was the success of such boys in their struggle. In general, however, society suffered severely from the risks thus involved, and the life which immediately surrounded them has often been weakened by the hesitation incident to the delay of the most capable in finding their fit places in the world. The most serious drawback was the discouragement which kept many boys, with less courage or strength, from venturing at all out of the narrow places in which they had been born and had passed their early days.

Perhaps the most serious drawback in both cases, especially with the first type, was the growth of the sentiment that led such men to think themselves self-made and thus to scorn to take the steps necessary to make up for lost time. One of the worst faults of a simple society is its trust in natural ability without recognition of the value of the steps that other men have taken in competitive work. The number of these in the professions and in the higher trades always tended to reduce the efficiency of the mass and to give wrong impressions of the society from which they were drawn. The Civil War did good service in helping to overcome this danger because the ambitious young soldiers, returning from active service and entering upon a training, saw the necessity for preparation and were not deterred by age from making the best of their abilities.

## Pioneer Foundations

### *INCREASE OF HOLIDAYS*

THE first impulse of the settler was to acquire as much land as possible. The proverbial land hunger of the race accounts for much of this desire, but probably the strongest feeling was the settler's exaggerated hope as to his outlook for a market for his products. He saw this land, lying all about him, unoccupied, awaiting conquest, and, having given what he deemed proper attention to the choice of a neighborhood and site, seeing that land was plentiful and cheap and the demand for it sluggish, he often overestimated his own capacity for work or management. As a result he was tempted to take on more than he could manage. He soon found that he could not cultivate it with any approach to efficiency, and that the agrarian conditions round about did not enable him to find tenants or helpers. His ambitions, therefore, sometimes outran his capacities and his opportunities.

Almost the least enterprising among the men who had the courage to enter the Pioneer struggle would make an effort to get land in his own name, even if his lack of capital or ability, both of which must be demonstrated, or the economic conditions were against success. While he gave up his ambitions with great regret, the fact that failure stared him in the face forced either removal to some other neighborhood or a reduction of his holdings. Generally speaking, if he had in him the ambition belonging to the man confident of final success he would choose the first alternative. Few things were more galling to the pride of the real Pioneer, with all the enterprise that entered into



## Difficulties About Land Distribution

the making of leadership, than to confess to his neighbors the need to sell any part of the land he had taken up in order that he might carry on with the rest. This process was analogous to that known as coming down in the world.

But in spite of the sentiment incident to individual pride or vanity it is a tendency that started soon after any settlement was under way and went on steadily though never so rapidly as sound economic health required. Thus, in 1850 the average size of farms for the entire country was 203 acres and for the Pioneer West still larger; by 1860 this average had slowly shrunk to 199 acres and declined rapidly to 153 acres in 1870. This was due not only to the sudden fall in the South but to a constant reduction in the newer States. Three causes contributed to this result: (1) recognition of the fact that the condition of being land poor was not ideal; (2) that creditable farming was not possible under such conditions; and (3) that the first difficulties of settlement having been overcome, a large contingent of men who poured in from the outside made a market for lands upon which the most difficult work had been done.

### *DIFFICULTIES ABOUT LAND DISTRIBUTION*

ONE of the original drawbacks to the distribution of lands was the disinclination to break up the sections, half sections, quarter sections, eighties, and even forties into which the government surveys had originally divided them. There was even more difficulty in doing this than under the old system of description by metes and bounds; for, somehow,

## Pioneer Foundations

custom gave a sort of prescription to these purely artificial divisions and it was a long time before owners would freely consider sales which involved the cutting up of such holdings into odd or irregular tracts. Even to the present time this feeling exists, and it will probably continue until trace of the original owners and their heirs into the second, third, or later generation has passed.

A certain pride has developed in the West in the keeping of lands, the title of which came to a family in the shape of an original grant from the government. This sentiment was strong in the areas of the original colonies where many families have maintained, even down to the present day, their ownership of such tracts under many difficulties long after they had ceased to have a practical economic value. Indeed, as known, this strong agrarian tendency existed not only in the mother country but here and wherever the Anglo-Saxon had settled himself.

It was this almost universal ownership of land that constituted the principal strength of this country. When free sale and inexpensive transfer became fixed policies, as was the case from the time that the government making no grants to individuals or companies took over from the Indians as monopoly owner all lands, the race was a free and fair one. There was then no other way to acquire large tracts than by patiently gathering them in by purchase. The economic conditions made this unprofitable for the reason that the man with the gift for money-making could invest to much better advantage in an infinite number of ways that opened to him.

## Difficulties About Land Distribution

So, when the time of the American Pioneer finally came he had nothing to do but to cultivate the lands owned by himself. It was then no longer necessary in order to command social position that he should acquire large holdings as had been the case in the mother country and the southern colonies. Thus his advent and his era marked the nearest return possible to the earlier yeoman — a word which more nearly describes the Pioneer than any that can be used as he illustrated at its best estate the triumph of the idea behind it. Under it was instituted that order of men whose motives and deeds have been and are the subject of my work.



10

*RELIGION*



*RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE PERIOD*

OF all the duties incumbent upon a student of the Pioneer period none is more difficult of fulfillment with truth and understanding than that under the caption at the head of this chapter. Population, despite increase in numbers or the lapse of time, is always immutably bound by the limitations of human nature; government, whatever growths or manifestations seem to follow one another, can present nothing new and only slowly shifts its forms or its methods; while changes in industry may involve losses, they also bring compensation; deaths and burials producing survivals and resurrections or being replaced by inventions and new combinations.

It is only over religion, in both its fundamentals and its outward forms, that the ploughshare of revolution has passed. Dogmas apparently firmly settled in 1830 had by 1870 been so shattered as to be almost unrecognizable; while methods formerly current had been lost almost as thoroughly as those which had once surrounded the rites of paganism. These profound changes cannot be marked by any visible monument; research cannot rear any monolith to fix a date or reveal a fact to a world still groping about in the fond belief that what formal religion once was it still remains. Thus, while known to all, none can write down truthfully after his analysis that pleasing formula Q. E. D.

## Pioneer Foundations

While many of the burdens of theology imposed by the leaders of the Reformation and their successors have been cast off there have passed with them, too often, the irrefragible faith, the sincerity, the joys and the comforts, the consolations and devotion of the days so often lamented and so sadly missed. Therefore, in recalling them we have to deal with a faith which, next to the primal necessities of the body and often before them, emphasized the demands and the service of the soul as the most vital of man's interests — as the most urgent of duties if both the individual and society were to be saved or to be deemed worth the saving.

### ARTICLES IN THE PIONEER CREED

IN order to indicate the old religious dogmas, I shall set down briefly in categorical form what they were and what they meant in the American Pioneer's life during the first three-quarters of his century of conflicts and wanderings :

1. They involved a faith, unquestioned and universal, in the existence of a Higher Power, not as a theory or an abstraction — not some moving force, or first Great Cause, not an undefined personification of Nature, but personal and real as life itself. Unseen, it governed every thought, act, desire, or hope of the individual, and through him of the mass; it involved a consciousness that not only was every thought and movement of the human being subject to this outside and higher direction, but that reward or punishment in this world or the next, birth, marriage, death, germination of the seed, growth of the plant to harvest and



## Articles in the Pioneer Creed

garnering, in a word, everything entering into the manifold needs, the experiences, and the motives of the individual in his relations to himself, to nature, and to society were inspired by God and directed by Him even in the most minute particular. Of himself, the human being was nothing : at any hour, busy or idle, asleep or awake, in prosperity or adversity, he had to depend upon this outside power more than did the newborn child upon ancestors, parents, physician, and nurse. History does not reveal in any place or at any time a fatalism deeper, more pervading, more wholly beyond reason or reserve.

2. Nor was the belief in the Evil One less positive or less pervading. He was a real devil, not for confinement in his own place, or in another form of existence; but he was here, in this world, individual, palpable, anthropomorphic. He was no less an article of faith, his personality was quite as real a cause for action or inaction, as potently an influence in daily life, as the Creator himself. It was often difficult to discover which of these opposed forces in the religion of that day, with its convincing appeal to fear, was more dreadful, more unforgiving, less easily moved to mercy or to comprehension of the wants, the needs, and the weaknesses of poor human nature. If the balance inclined either way, perhaps the devil had rather the better of it. His guile, his untiring efforts to develop the evil, his awful personality, were deemed necessary to bring proud or cringing sinners to some realization of their dependence upon an unseen Higher Power and thus to emphasize their own impotence. It was hard to shake him off or to think of

## Pioneer Foundations

him as less real than neighbor, family, or the individual believer himself.

3. The belief in a future existence was not then "nebulous and indefinite" as Henley insisted it has now become; but was as positive as that in the seen, actual earthly life itself. It was based upon the assurance that whatever fate the future might bring, death as surely marked the immediate entrance upon eternal life as conception and birth had promised an earthly existence: one conclusion was quite as real as the other.

4. The Heaven or the Hell in which life was to continue was no less real and scarcely less material than the Earth upon which human beings had begun their pilgrimage. Their metes and bounds were mapped: fixed and immutable; there was no escape from the one or the other, no middle place; the degrees of happiness in the one were accentuated, while the misery and the suffering in the other were imagined by analogies drawn from the surroundings in which the earthly life was passed; but, whatever they were, they were believed; and the justice of thus meting out reward or punishment was not open to question.

5. The Bible was the one, the great, the universal, guide for this world and the next. It was accepted in all its literalness; as it bore no possible relation to man or to events it could be neither human nor historical. In its most minute features as in its remotest ramifications, it was the very word of God, conceived and produced without human agency or intervention. It contained no element of tragedy or comedy; its poetry, romance, and history were unrecog-

## Articles in the Pioneer Creed

nized because absent from knowledge or imagination : it reflected only the thoughts and ways of God, never those of man. It was a true view from what was, to them, a miraculous, though real, Sinai. Whether as revealing the wail of a people which, insignificant in numbers and achievement, languished in the thralldom of Egypt, Babylon, or Assyria, turning now into a hymn of hate, or again into a song of triumph, it was the real word of God.

The creative six days were six days, no more no less, the sun, standing still at the bidding of Joshua, the story of Jonah and the whale, and the adventures of Samson were as matter of fact as going to bed or to work. Nothing in the Bible was symbolic or figurative; it was in every sense the word of God delivered to man : hallowed, unquestioned and unquestionable, and as such to be obeyed implicitly. It made their speech yea yea, and nay nay, and bound every thread that entered into the fabric of their thoughts or acts.

6. The Bible characters were not recognized as belonging to a nomad race whose petty adventures, unredeemed by even a single large or national success, were colored throughout with the imagery of the East; but, to these people, themselves living in new scenes, struggling into recognition, separated by thousands of years of time, infinite changes in circumstances and unknown distances in space, with centuries of almost unfettered freedom contrasted with a settled condition of serfdom or exile, these remote, wandering sheiks became either examples or warnings. If their characters were good or bad, they were only as God had

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created them : special guides or warnings not only to those for whom His revelations were made, but for mankind in all times and places.

7. Reality, passing beyond the Jewish dispensation, went still further. Unconsciously to these people, time had read into the Bible itself a gloss that was wholly modern. As they dealt with revelation, so far as religion was concerned, there was no history older than the Reformation — meaning thereby the movement of which Luther, Calvin, and Knox were the apostles. This had gradually made a Protestantism which, depriving Christianity of its origins, had destroyed the foundations. More than fifteen hundred formative years were rejected as not only useless, but as false and hurtful. It was less that the historic Christian religion had been overlaid with ignorance or indifference : it did not exist, and everything that suggested this missing element was reviled and cast out. Its place was taken by the events, the violences, the individual interpretations of the men who, since the early days of the sixteenth century, had assumed direction and control of the faith.

8. This all-comprehending narrowness, with its accompanying bigotry, had been inherited from a long line of predecessors who, living in wholly different scenes and in strange surroundings, had added their parts. There was no longer open persecution for opinion's sake (the steady growth of the power of the State and the industrial revolution had made this impossible) so that intolerance rather took the form of a hardness which, making them the victims of their own awful doctrines and habits, increased the dif-

## Articles in the Pioneer Creed

ficulty of achieving salvation under their own rules. These doctrines and habits had so enlarged the area of fear that for nearly a hundred years an unending succession of revivals had followed in the wake of settlement. These movements had grown into popular frenzies which, though losing their force, had hardened all the emotional nerves and arteries of a people, otherwise well-meaning, and paralyzed their power to understand the inherent religious sentiment, so strong in mankind, and had made it, in spite of rigid underlying beliefs, little less than a travesty.

9. One of the striking developments, often overlooked, in the theology of the Reformation, or rather in its extreme practice under the ideas of Calvin and the later Puritans, is that of direct approach to God, with far less reference, than the Christian scheme of salvation had warranted, to the intercession of the Saviour. The elimination of the Saints, especially of the Virgin, had promoted the idea of communication direct to God of the needs, desires, and hopes of men, rather than vicariously. The rejection of the doctrine of the Real Presence—the supreme crux of the Reformers—had also encouraged a familiarity with God, so that assumed individual knowledge of His purpose came to be the distinguishing feature of worship. This was never more powerfully in evidence than when its end could be foreseen after the disruptive effect of creative criticism had shaken the authority of the Old Testament, and when the political struggles of the new world and the old had added to these revolutionary results. It has only been since the vital epochs, when these great broad marks were made,

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that Protestant Christians, recognizing anew the need of human aid and their former weakness in assuming to interpret for themselves the decrees of God, have returned with new reverence to the idea of intervention and vicarious sacrifice.

10. The fundamental issues that had grown out of the Reformation — so far as anything is ever settled in theology — had long been fixed. The real presence, Episcopacy, State churches, an intolerance that invited and insured persecution for opinion's sake, the temporal power of the Pope, all had disappeared, while the revived claim of an uninterrupted apostolic succession had not yet reached these remote districts.

### *HOW THESE DOGMAS EXPRESSED THEMSELVES*

THERE were, however, questions of internal policy or belief, mainly ceremonial, sometimes revivals of old or exploded heresies or age-long doctrines (policies rather than principles) that, during the years under review, were constantly under a discussion, perhaps even more fervid and universal in their dying gasp than ever before. Conviction and conversion, election and reprobation, predestination and the final perseverance of the Saints — how strange all these obsolete words, with the dead ideas behind them, sound now — were under universal debate, individual with individual, husband with wife, father and mother with children, son or daughter with brother or sister, friend with friend, in the smithy, the country store, the pulpit, the grove, or on the road, day by day, night by night, month

## How These Dogmas Expressed Themselves

by month, endlessly; and, in all cases, the disputants were as far from agreement or settlement in the end as at the beginning. Although these questions were recondite beyond the imagination of man to conceive they remained the stock subjects for talk and dispute, safe because they were eternal and no final or binding decision could be reached.

But the favored question, recurring as regularly as the tides, or the rising and setting sun and like them equally beyond human control, was baptism. This dealt less with its necessity for salvation or its efficiency for this purpose than with the mode of administration. It was a triangular contest between immersion, sprinkling, and pouring. Each had not only its real and disputative merits but subdivided itself as to ways of ministration. Some denominations forced immersion; others permitted a choice; some preachers or schools of thought had a favorite way of their own; while others varied the ceremony to suit their diverse conclusions. The advocates of one way scouted the other two and scrupled or refused to recognize them as binding or even safe. The discussions about baptism (sometimes having in it the elements of the concrete, because, being material, it could be seen as other doctrines could not) were more interesting on this account.

Perhaps the most exciting branch of this always animated discussion was infant baptism : some prohibiting; some permitting; others requiring. It sometimes seemed to the young listener of the time that the question whether the child should or should not be baptized, and how, might be deemed

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to transcend in importance the life and existence of the child itself. Thus did zeal and knowledge manifest themselves in the days of simplicity and faith.

### SECTS ACTIVE IN THE WORK

CONSTANT removal, the process of assimilation, and the sparseness of population produced a confused blend of religious conditions and tendencies, having the characteristics of the principal areas of origin. Many settlers when swallowed by the wilderness had to adapt themselves, at least for a time, to strange outward alignments. Finding no associates with their distinctive form of belief or practice, the joining of themselves to other bodies was often a necessity. It was not a question of giving up connections or services but of forming relations with those whose opinions and ceremonies most nearly resembled their own. Of course a Catholic was always a Catholic, and an Episcopalian clung to his own communion; both would travel far to maintain this relation unbroken while waiting for co-religionists among newcomers. Presbyterians were generally steadfast though individuals might affiliate (almost always unwillingly) with existing sects while still waiting patiently for like-minded associates. Members of the Reformed, Lutheran, or Moravian bodies were generally few in number and would take refuge, sometimes permanently, with another body. Congregationalists and Presbyterians had not then become so distinctly standardized as has since become the case. Most of the minor denominations, except the Scotch and Scotch-Irish branches of the Presbyterians



## Catholic and Episcopalian Contributions Small

who built a church before they even thought of a school-house, helped to make communities or settled with their own; but none of these was a distinctly Pioneer church with the religious essentials of the Pioneer mind. They were generally better educated than the average, were more settled and less nervous and restless than those with more primitive instincts and necessities; as a result, their religion like their social life varied accordingly.

A brief analysis of the position and attitude of these various sects is necessary to a fairly complete understanding of denominational contributions.

### CATHOLIC AND EPISCOPALIAN CONTRIBUTIONS SMALL

THE Mother Church had little part in the broad religious movement which from 1769 onwards crossed the mountains into and through the wilderness. Indirectly the Catholic influence because it was the first was greatest of all. It had scattered its missionaries over Canada, the Northern West, the Southeast, and the Southwest before the representatives of any other sect had made any impression upon the interior of the continent or even before these sects had come into existence. It achieved a modest though somewhat exaggerated success in its dealings with the Indian. Thus, when the history of early Christian activity in the new world is written, its record leads all the rest in priority: but, when by the victory at Quebec in 1759 the British had retrieved their disastrous defeat under Braddock, thereby changing the destiny and fixing the language of a con-

## Pioneer Foundations

tinant, Catholicism as a sect had little direct part in the work remaining to be done over almost boundless areas.

The main results of Wolfe's victory were political and linguistic; but its most far-reaching effects were religious. The old faith became a permitted worship; though, generally speaking, it was either proscribed, or hampered, and even suspected. It soon came to be looked upon as an enemy, and while outward persecution disappeared there was such inherent, persistent intellectual intolerance that its few adherents crept timidly along with the ever-moving course of settlement. In spite of an almost universal distrust of the church the belief persisted that, as had been taught by all the leaders of Protestant sects for three hundred years, it was still the Scarlet Woman. The pestilent Know-Nothing movement soon exhausted itself; but, even if it had crossed the Mississippi River to the westward, it would not have found enough Irish Catholics upon whom to sharpen its teeth. When the Irish finally came neither numbers nor position brought power or influence. They were never sharers in the genius or the triumphs of the Pioneer.

Episcopalianism, early weakened first by a suspicion of English leanings and then by disestablishment in Virginia and the South, did not become a separate force in the Pioneer life that flowed so freely out of the Old Dominion and its neighboring States. It made no continuing or successful appeal to the Pioneer in whom it inspired scarcely less of hatred and suspicion than that felt for Catholicism. There was no place for Episcopacy, or for the ordered serv-

## Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Others

ice of these two dominating and original bodies of Christians. Both of them represented too faithfully the historic forms of the faith doomed to be overlaid.

### PRESBYTERIANS, CONGREGATIONALISTS, AND OTHERS

1. CONGREGATIONALISM never became a potent factor in the settlement of the Middle West because it had been limited almost wholly to New England, with a small overflow into New Jersey. Its adherents found what scope they could mainly in New York when its belated settlement was under way, and later, in Michigan and Wisconsin which lay directly in their line of march. They had made almost no impression upon Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Most of its followers, drawn from the few New England settlers, found their way into the towns where with settled services and surroundings they had little in common with the people who lived in the new rude farming districts.

2. Presbyterianism in its earlier manifestations had distinctly appealed to the Pioneer mind. From Ireland and Scotland its representatives had poured into the Middle and Southern colonies in great numbers. They had settled in New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and had shown the spirit of unrest that drove them across the mountains into Tennessee and Kentucky. Here they left a plain, ineradicable mark upon education and jurisprudence; but when it came to spreading over the Northwest

## Pioneer Foundations

and still remaining Presbyterians, they struck the peculiar revival movements of the time. Perhaps, in the majority of cases, they could only resist these by surrender; so that, while the successors of the Irish and Protestant Scotch went north and scattered themselves through the wilderness and thence over the prairie, most of them had affiliated temporarily with Methodists, Baptists, or Campbellites. They so remained, although many doctrines and tendencies in these sects were repugnant until the change of methods in worship carried their successors back into denominations more in keeping with their historic traditions and character. In spite of these changes which occupied more than half a century at a vital time in the history of settlement, Presbyterianism in the prairie districts, though never the distinctive Pioneer faith, was still potent on its own well-settled lines : retaining then a deep interest in education and a devotion to republican ideas and institutions that was little less than fanatical.

The adherents of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Moravian bodies were too few to make much impression upon the new inchoate mass. As explained, many of them lost their identity in other denominations; but, whether separately or in association, their influence was almost negligible.

### *REMNANTS OF THE OLD DENOMINATIONS*

THESE older sects were the primary offshoots from Christianity somewhere along the line of its history, with their own traditions, memories, and pride. Struggle or protest as they might they could not entirely eliminate the past :

## Remnants of the Old Denominations

they could not forget that somewhere there had been State religions with power to bind and to loose. They had a general attachment to order and system. They professed and practiced rites and ceremonies — always believing that these were their own — they preferred to worship in consecrated buildings and, with whatever variations, followed Christian forms and ceremonials firmly grounded in the history of the church universal. They did not take kindly to religious services in schoolhouses, courthouses, or groves. They met in their own homes, or in barns, or in improvised places of worship until by the arrival of a sufficient number of sympathetic recruits they could build a church, often connecting with it a primitive school or academy for training their children in religion as well as in letters. They had a settled clergy who, generally speaking, were fairly educated according to the standards of the time. They did not affect union services or revivals, or practice proselytism : they preferred to hold their own adherents and those naturally attracted to them.

These bodies maintained touch with their communions in the places of origin, and with the missionary or other societies whose work it was to promote the continued development of their offshoots. In this respect, the latter patterned themselves somewhat upon the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel which in the opening years of the eighteenth century began the work which gave new life to the Church of England in all parts of the English-speaking world. Thus, they preserved their historic position, obtained aid for building churches, found eligible young

## Pioneer Foundations

clergymen, and maintained relations with the general body however widely it might be dispersed. Having these qualities, they were of necessity gregarious, and in addition to their own contributions they could depend upon distant, sympathetic patrons for sufficient funds to erect their churches, support a settled ministry, and maintain their services in an orderly way.

The clergy of these denominations, whether Catholic or Protestant, did their work zealously and with the knowledge of their time; but it was an old-time order that they maintained. They were assiduous in gathering and caring for their own; they conducted services with the dignity to which, by prescription and long use, they had been accustomed; they were quite as orthodox, as jealous for the faith, as the most earnest or the newest and loudest convert could ask. They raised money for building churches, and they sought out the most fitting men attainable for their spiritual teachers. And yet, their ministrations were meant for their own people and not for the mass.

### *CREDAL AFFILIATIONS OF THE PIONEER*

BUT, neither singly nor combined did they furnish the religion of the ever-shifting Pioneer to that population which on a given day would be in one State and within three months or less would have sent its representatives as settlers hundreds of miles further into the West. Such a population had both to adapt itself to changed conditions and to find in its new surroundings something congenial to itself. Accustomed to worship in woods, camps, and schoolhouses,

## Credal Affiliations of the Pioneer

it was satisfied with the same accommodations in any environment. If these people had sought the settledness incident to the orderly, well-established churches whose character has been outlined they would soon have found them in their original living places; but, as they did not want these things they moved on, hoping and expecting to find at their journey's end a body of worshippers, an order of universal church, to welcome them to something both congenial and accustomed.

All the world over statistics of religious bodies have long been the despair of census takers and students; and nowhere have the difficulties and the failures been more marked than in this country, particularly in its newer settlements. Such returns, either official or unofficial, are based upon church buildings, property valuations, and sittings. Thus, in 1850 when the first systematic attempt was made to gather and analyze the figures, Iowa with a population of nearly two hundred thousand, of whom seven out of eight were certified as of church age, the number of churches was 207, of which 93 with 20,755 sittings (about one-half of the whole) were credited to the older denominations as situated mainly in the struggling villages and county seats.

At this time the State contained nearly eight hundred public schools whose buildings were the dependence for the religious services of probably four-fifths of the entire population. The census takers could not count these, and yet they were as much churches as if every one had been solemnly consecrated. Practically none of them was used by the settled denominations whose activities have been

## Pioneer Foundations

described; so that, if the whole population had depended upon church buildings the supply of religious privileges would have been scanty indeed.

It will be necessary, therefore, to look further for the dominating denominational preferences of the Pioneer. There is small difficulty in finding them, in spite of their comparative absence as bodies from official returns. Bearing in mind the origins of this population, it is interesting to record that of the church accommodations in the Southern States just under three-quarters belonged to the Methodists and Baptists, while in the Northwestern States six out of ten were divided between the Methodists, Baptists, and "Christians" — the latter then almost universally known as Campbellites. It is to these bodies, then, that we must look for the religious affiliations of the Pioneers not only of the Central West but of the South from 1820 onwards. It is in these, working separately but with an unconscious unity of purpose, that the distinctive religious activities of the time must be sought. For good or ill, they must be credited with fair work done or blamed for narrowness or failure. It is desirable to subject them to brief analysis.

### THE BAPTISTS IN ALL THEIR VARIETIES

1. NOMINALLY the Baptists were the oldest of these denominations though in reality they had been so often reconstructed and so many strange and often seemingly opposing elements had joined in their final constitution as to make the historic origin doubtful. Many of their adherents claimed to derive directly from Calvin, and strength was



## The Baptists in Their Varieties

given to this claim by the fact that the distinctive doctrines represented by him were found in most sects bearing the name of Baptist. They were united in the belief of immersion and insistent, almost fanatical, in its practice. In the contentious period through which the theological discussion was passing, this meant strength because it represented an unalterable opinion, a positive conclusion — always a virtue with the Pioneer. They were close-unionists, which marked them at least in their own view as a chosen people : they were the elect of God. However they might apply the doctrine of election to personal salvation; of predestination to Heaven or to Hell from all eternity, outside the choice or the power of the beneficiary or the victim; there was always the assumption that the Baptist church, to whatever division it might belong, through its gate of immersion, its peculiar insight into the decrees of God was, if not an assured passport to safety, at least the only possible way. The individual might be saved, or lost. This lay beyond his own power whether by faith or works; but, in any event the Baptist road was his only chance. They carried these teachings even much further on the way to logical conclusions than did the fanatics who succeeded in England and New England to the doctrines and the power of the original Puritans.

2. They preached without ceasing, had a settled clergy (uneducated for the most part narrow and mediocre, chosen by themselves in each community) always on hand to minister, console, or threaten. In their forms of government they were distinctly republican and popular, with

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the virtue of seldom interfering as a body in purely party politics; administered a discipline that had little mercy; and indulged almost not at all in favoritism. At funerals their ministers consigned some of their followers to heaven; while others were either sent away unshriven or to hell without question or the suggestion of a doubt. They preferred St. Luke's version of the parable of the straight gate in the Sermon on the Mount\*, to that of St. Matthew,\*\* because it seemed to make harder the passage to heaven and confirmed their interpretation of the difficulties placed in the way of salvation and thus brought more comfort to those who expected or hoped to get through. In a word, they were rigid, never faltered in doctrine or policy, and, while exercising their powers of condemnation or doubt, were almost wholly free in the application of their hard creed from softness even to themselves or their own. Like all severe sects or leaders of movements, they were better than their professions.\*\*\* Although in no conscious sense were they hypocrites, they were as much the victims of their own harshness, their ingrained superstitions, as those to whom they ministered or the outsiders who were relentlessly consigned to hopeless perdition. Curiously enough, they had a great influence with the poorest and the most ignorant of the community. Out of the conversions in a

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\* Luke XIII, 25.

\*\* Matthew VII, 13-14.

\*\*\* I think that our popular theology has gained in decorum, and not in principle, over the superstitions it has displaced. But men are better than this theology. Their daily life gives it the lie. Every ingenuous and aspiring soul leaves the doctrine behind him in his own experience; and all men feel sometimes the falsehood which they cannot demonstrate. — Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Compensation*.

## The Baptists in Their Varieties

union revival the Baptists could count upon more than their numerical proportion of the poor whites and ne'er-do-wells, the elements commonly looked upon as hopeless, at least in this world. There was thus in them a democracy that carried them far among such a people, living among new conditions, in surroundings inseparable from plainness and simplicity.

3. Whatever these Pioneer Baptists might be or teach, they were not a personal sect — that is, their appeal to the heterogeneous mass was not made as followers of some local or provincial leader. Whether in Switzerland, France, Scotland, England, or America, Calvin was their hero; it was to his philosophy that they had made their successful appeal. There appeared to be in human nature some quality attracted by doctrines that to outsiders seemed forbidding and merciless and something that showed a power to think and to do even if the heavens should fall.

The Baptists attracted great numbers because in an age when fear ruled they had the courage of their own harsh convictions and conclusions: let them lead where they might. The qualities that gave them power lay in solution through those who came into these Pioneer times. Accustomed to hard conditions, living in surroundings where dangers hovered about them, they were not looking for softness or yielding. They were American and they found that this creed, otherwise so narrow, fitted them: they, therefore, embraced and clung to it long after its confessions of faith and its practices had been left behind by the thing called modern progress.

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### METHODISM AND ITS WORK

1. THE growth of Methodism in America in the three-quarters of a century after John Wesley in 1784 had ordained presbyters and authorized Coke and Asbury to begin the work of organization is, without question, the most wonderful single fact in the religious history of America. Its success was achieved in spite of Wesley's early and rather conspicuous failure in Georgia and of his bitter opposition to the political principles underlying the War for Independence. So far as his direct relation to the work was concerned, it was little more than that of a licensee.

Wesley's name was not, as in the country of origin, perpetuated in the title; his opposition to the creation of an independent church was ignored; and his antagonism to an Episcopate was followed here, ere long, by the formal election of his anointed superintendents as Bishops. In spite of these seemingly adverse tendencies, American Methodism soon became and remained the monument of Wesley and carried out his personal ideas and policies far more distinctly than had been possible for him and his following in England.

The methods by which the Gospel had been brought home almost for the first time to the miners, ship carpenters, sailors, longshoremen, farm peasants, the forgotten or overlooked masses of England; the personal touch, the outdoor preaching, the contempt for mere forms, the revival activities, even the hysteria which accompanied these manifestations; the unconventionality; the seeming irreverence; the occasional bare vulgarity; and the appeal to good works

## Methodism and Its Work

as against the extreme faith in fate or Calvinism were, curiously enough, to attract for themselves a following in America and to attain a power never foreseen by the man who preached these doctrines and emphasized the policies behind them in sixty thousand sermons.

Its growth had also been fostered here by the marvellous preaching of George Whitefield and the so-called Great Awakening that preceded and, perhaps, precipitated the political movements current from 1754 when Franklin proposed Federation with Canada. The weakness of Anglicanism with its failure to adapt itself to American conditions; the prefigured schism in Congregationalism as the old Puritan ideas and manners lost their hold and Unitarianism pushed itself into view; the rigidity and narrowness of Presbyterianism — all these prepared the soil for a sect that, measured by standards then existing, should be tolerant, outwardly liberal and, at the same time, orthodox.

2. The organization of the Methodist bodies (however they have differed in details, the essential features have always been the same in their various branches) was from the beginning republican, so that it not only fitted as an idea into the genius of the American people but became what until lately it has always remained a political, though not of necessity everywhere and always a party, church. In its devotion to Other-Worldliness, it never forgot that there was a This-Worldliness. If its standards of learning were low, its knowledge of the peculiar humanity it had to deal with was never surpassed by the Jesuit at his best estate.

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Looking at such a movement historically, it is clear to see how it was bound to spread among a simple people who tired, as all the world was then becoming, of formalism were ready to welcome anything that would appease spiritual hunger and restore them, as a whole and not as an elect few, to that favor with their Maker which they believed to be both the due and the right of all men. Recognizing the American passion for self-government, they showed themselves in organization and discipline more republican than the republicans.

At every step in the scheme they found a place for the humblest or youngest layman, the woman and the child, on through the Sunday school, the class-leader, the exhorter, the local preacher, the circuit rider, up to the Senior Bishop. The way was clear and open to all. The conferences, district and county, quarterly and annual, special and general, had no secrets. If, as in all things human, there were cabals, even these could be seen and their machinations exposed or defeated. If ever in history there was a body that stood out before all men for just what it was, it was the Methodist Church in America from its real organization until the years following close upon the year 1870.

The result of this openness has already been indicated. Dispute and division within its ranks seemed to increase its numbers and magnify its power; if it quarrelled over slavery it was still able to gather to itself in each broken part more adherents than ever before. In the South it so attracted the slave that, when emancipation came, it was ready through its African branch to dominate the negro

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while the whites were more firmly bound to it than ever. In the new West, as well as in the reservoirs of population, its revivals spread over the face of the land and, for a time, it threatened with extermination all other forms of worship; between 1830 and 1870 this process of progressive, though relative, absorption went on in the Pioneer area at a rate quite equal to anything hitherto known in our religious annals.

3. Its system of itineracy fitted into the custom of shifting officials at every convenient excuse or opportunity. In neither case could power any more be concentrated in the hands of the few than its ecclesiastical or political representatives could be the ablest or the most influential in any given community.

As a consequence of these popular policies, and of the demands created by their success, its clergy were little fitted for the work previously expected from a ministry; they were ill-trained — perhaps, in the majority of cases, hardly trained at all. They were inclined to deride learning and, in common with the Baptists and the Christians, to emphasize the “call to preach” as of far greater importance than the qualities gained through education and knowledge, or than fine services and magnificent rituals. The ignorance of the majority of the Methodist rural clergy, within the period treated, was monumental, whether measured by the best standards then existing even in their own communities or by those of a better order since established. It often seemed that zeal, the bodily strength to bear hardships and exposure, and lung capacity, were the gifts most necessary

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for the average circuit rider. As villages grew into towns, as adherents increased in numbers, the presiding Bishop would send, not without much opposition, the best he had to these appointments, thus creating a special class while reducing the general average of attainments and fitness to a low state indeed : an average far below the highest order of the membership to which they were to minister.

It was not that these few were not wanted or were unappreciated. There was, probably, no community so small that the demand for such preachers did not come out of it. If there was one intellectual exercise that the Pioneer enjoyed it was a sermon, a political speech, or a court argument, equal or superior in his mind to the best he had heard of. Even this standard for a sermon was low : so that character, knowledge, elocution, and evident sincerity were seldom found in combination. It was often the zealot who could most successfully conceal his unfitness by a sermon drawn direct from the brimstone or by dealing with abstract credal commonplaces, perhaps concerning severe policies or practices approaching abandonment, or in denunciation of a preacher or doctrine savoring of heterodoxy — such a preacher often filled the ideal of his followers and was most in demand.

With all shortcomings, it was perhaps fortunate that everywhere present in society there was a body which could carry on so many of its religious functions for itself. This system brought out much talent, zeal, and real devotion in the local preacher upon whom dependence had to be placed for probably one-half the Sundays in the year. The



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fact is that, though not professionals, these men often had greater ability than the regular preacher. The full-bodied sermons of one to two hours and off-hand prayers of indefinite length and stupidity were not expected from him, and their place was taken often by the short timely business-like dealing with a subject in a few minutes. The time came when even the much-ridiculed exhorter could throw more interest into his brief picture of the joys of heaven or the pains of hell than the regular with his thin, long-drawn-out sermon on the same time-worn subjects. It often happened as communities grew older, that the best of these extemporized supplies after receiving what was designated as a "call" would go away to the simple theological college of the time, and develop on other scenes a fair measure of fitness for their peculiar work.

4. The Presiding Elders, who have disappeared in name and to an extent in function, were generally supposed to be the best equipped men in the church for the work to be done. Generally speaking, they would not be preferred until they had gained a fair measure of experience in the Conference to which they were attached. There was always a struggle for these places. The center of a district would be the largest town or village from which the various separate charges could be reached most conveniently and was likely to be provided with better school facilities and be more attractive as a place of residence.

The Presiding Elder was, in effect, a neighborhood Bishop preaching as and when he chose in any church, presiding over the local and district conferences, coming into contact

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in every neighborhood with a number and variety of people quite impossible for any other official of his body. It was seldom that the famed revival preacher was preferred for these places. Preaching was less vital to success, either for the church or himself, than ability to direct the varied interests under his charge, and so to shift his preachers that no neighborhood should be neglected. Even with the low requirements necessary for admission to the ministry, there was never a sufficient number to meet the demand created by the growth of new settlements and the increase of population.

The importance of executive ability was obvious : it was one of the secrets of the marked success of the Methodists that their system was, first of all, a business one. Responsibility was always awaiting the man who could assume it. In a rough way, in a period when methods were inclined to be loose, the organization was based upon system. Under that of the Methodists, work was to be done : and somebody had to do it. No body of worshippers, however small or remote, was overlooked or wholly neglected. The sect so expanded itself as to meet every emergency. This was due largely to the power and capability of this peculiar official.

As is common with most small functionaries the Presiding Elder was prone to be something of a despot in his own little sphere. He never forgot the Pauline precept about magnifying his office. Upon his nod or frown at the annual conference, might depend whether a minister should be put down or put up, or, in case of enmity, transferred

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by arrangement or exchange to a minor charge in another conference often distant and strange.

Such a dignity was, in its small way, a center of intrigue. If its holder developed his dictatorial instincts too strongly, rebellion would arise within his jurisdiction and upon the expiration of his term he might be sent back to a charge under some hatred rival or be himself treated to the transfer he had meted out to others.

5. Every Methodist preacher, whether Bishop, Presiding Elder, stated minister, local preacher, or exhorter, was always expected to hold himself ready to give a reason for the faith that was in him. As in theology, unlike anything else human, there is no semblance of finality, no question was ever so settled that it was not necessary to debate it over and over again. This was not merely, or even oftener, in public: it was more likely to be in the blacksmith shop, the mill, or the country store, that the minister would meet a rival or a heckler in some other denomination, or oftener a mocker who, having read up on some special question, must try his mettle upon the first victim he came across, often one that had formerly been his own pastor.

Woe be to such a minister if his dialectics were not duly whetted: especially, he must not run out of apposite biblical texts or quotations from Wesley to support the position of his church or his own announced conclusions. As he had few authorities to draw on other than the Bible and probably some out-of-date commentary, and little time or inclination for study, he was often at a disadvantage. His assumed discomfiture would become the theme of

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ribaldry by opponents, which by bringing humiliation to friends would afford new ground for dispute. Thus, the vicious circle was never broken : out of ignorance and contention would come an ill-will that might infect a neighborhood or drive a worthy, promising man out of his chosen work.

6. I have said that the Methodists were almost distinctively a political even a party church. From 1854 when on account of new and rapid settlement the newly-born Republican party carried Iowa until 1873 when James Harlan was defeated for the Senate, to be a Democrat was practically a bar to being also a Methodist preacher. The church attached itself only in a mild way to the anti-slavery agitation — the notion that it had done otherwise being a gloss added after emancipation was assured. But, in politics of all kinds where worth-while patronage was to be distributed, or influence exerted, the Methodist church both in its clergy of every rank and in its membership could be counted upon, almost to a man, as a party force.

It was more truculent in its partisan alignment than the Jesuits were ever known to be. At the same time it developed far more prudence in not showing its hand than any religious body known since the days of established churches. When it could not elect one of its own, it would make terms with the most friendly or eligible of the candidates presenting themselves. There was little hope that such men would be able to do anything directly for the church : a big vote thrown to a successful aspirant, would, however, increase that prestige which is so potent as a

## The Place of the Campbellites

motive in human action. Nor, except during the Civil War, was this power wielded openly from the pulpit in spite of the fact that its clergy went almost uniformly upon the stump in support of the party to which the majority was attached. While, to modify a reported saying of Horace Greeley, all Republicans were not Methodists, Methodists were so distinctively Republican in the Pioneer region that even the suspicion of heterodoxy in politics would have been almost as fatal to an ambitious preacher as a serious heterodoxy in religion.

Perhaps no unity that was developed out of the Pioneer character continued longer or ever had a more vital influence than this particular feature in the religious and political life of the whole Middle West. This power was in no way surprising when the circumstances are considered : it proves how thoroughly the Methodists, in their fundamental character and government, had assimilated themselves to the political tendencies and developments of that time. Almost a revolution was required to break its hold. In later years this condition, looked upon as clever while it continued, was to have a detrimental effect upon Methodism from which, indeed, recovery was a slow and difficult process.

### *THE PLACE OF THE CAMPBELLITES*

1. THE triumvirate of popular sects was completed by the Christians, or Disciples of Christ, better known as Campbellites from their founder Alexander Campbell, a Scotchman who starting as a Presbyterian shuttle-cocked himself

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by turns into various other denominations. By reason of ability and a restlessness that nothing could curb, he appeared at the head of a sect of his own. On the road he had been caught in a movement with the Baptists from whom he had absorbed the doctrine of immersion. It was not long until, for him, this rite took on an importance greater than all other dogmas. It was accompanied by a newly-asserted position for the New Testament. He did not reject the old dispensation, but the emphasis upon the new was shown by the distinctive name "Christian".

Campbell, trained in all the theological disputes of his time, was at home in discussions with clergymen of all denominations, Catholic or Protestant, asserted himself with a truculence that soon attracted a large following. Distributing his work over Pennsylvania, Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky (the newer seed-plots from which Western population was drawn) he became active in time to make his talents and influence felt before the Great Revival had run its course. He was thus able to take advantage of its momentum and soon had a sect which, like himself, was personal, restless, and tireless. They were made up of born propagandists whose intellectual activities found their sole outlet in religious debates. They gave little time or attention to slavery, temperance, or other movements or fads, but, believing that they had a mission to regenerate Christianity, devoted themselves zealously to their task. In the beginning every male member was or might be a preacher without special education, training, license, or examination — even a call being scarcely necessary.

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2. Naturally, such a policy brought into action all the loquacity of a community never distinguished for theological taciturnity. Following the example of the founder, his followers took the field with an energy which early showed results. Other denominations were put upon their mettle. Nothing was exempt from Campbellite attack. Sufficiently orthodox, despite this almost abnormal activity and disputatiousness, to make successful appeal to the sentiment of the time, never resting themselves, or giving rest to any other clergy or their own laity, they were a new force : pushing themselves and their doctrines at all times regardless of place; they cared nothing for proprieties or conventionalities. They were soon engaged in joint discussions everywhere and anywhere with Catholic Bishops and Archbishops, with leading clergymen of every denomination, with laymen, with anybody that could be drawn by such methods. Throwing away what they did not believe to be essential they naturally had many advantages because they were able to conduct the debate on their own line.

3. For them there was no Christian foundation other than the New Testament. They had just discovered in their own way what to them was the true doctrine and they were eager to proclaim it. They cared nothing for church buildings of their own and had no special respect for consecrations, sacraments, or other forms. They stuck to their doctrines, preaching what they proclaimed to be Christ and him crucified, baptizing with water, according to their own interpretation of the New Testament, all that they could reach. With them there was no election, no

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foreordination, no trial service, no six months of probation. They utilized public halls in towns, barns or groves in the country, and were at home in every schoolhouse however small or remote. They were really, though not consciously, the evangelists of liberalism; but as they had no concealments, prejudices, mysteries, exclusions, or, except baptism, no hard and fast dogmas to which they were irrevocably committed, and yet they were truculent Protestants, they appealed to a simple people always ready for something new or exciting and as a result achieved such a success that in a little while they were challenging all comers. They were proselytizers without apology. They welcomed everybody that came, and went into the highways, by-ways, and hedges.

Withal they were not inclined to theological bitterness; instead they were rather open to the charge of softness and sentimentalism. With a rapid success they soon threw off some coarser affectations and weaknesses, and it was not long until they had a clergy of their own, making up in zeal and push what it lacked in training or knowledge, building churches, when it could, but still not magnifying this part of its office. Its preachers, when it got them, were prone to be glib and rhetorical, and to retain, on occasion, the boldness and truculence of their earlier days. For people with even a suggestion of culture they were somewhat tiresome because they neither had nor pretended to have it themselves.

4. In short, they were very human, theatrical rather than dramatic, with few ideas beyond their own mission about which they were so earnest as often to make them-



## Church Buildings Not Necessary

selves ridiculous. Considering their surroundings, and looked at psychologically, they were interesting people : as nothing and nobody could put them down, they took themselves over-seriously; and yet like all such groups they were not agreeable to live with. They were too self-conscious to commend them overmuch to others who, differing in temper, really thought that some things were worth preservation. It never occurred to them even to imagine that anybody in all the world or anything in it worth having ever existed before Alexander Campbell suddenly saw the light and started all his congenial followers on a line of thought and action both new and sufficient for the universal needs of mankind. They really preached a new dispensation : less that of Christ, as they so ardently claimed, and in some cases no doubt believed, than that of Alexander Campbell.

### CHURCH BUILDINGS NOT NECESSARY

I HAVE endeavored to analyze as briefly and clearly as possible, the salient points in the denominational development of the time. This has been done without any prejudice or prepossession that might impair just conclusions. These conditions can only be examined in the light of what they were, as a whole, in their constituent denominations or sects. The principal effort has been to find out and to tell what these bodies were, and to determine what the Pioneer mind wanted and received with little regard to the influences operating elsewhere to change almost in its entirety the course of Christian thought and development.

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After studying the constitution of the popular bodies which by reason of number and activity dominated the situation, it would avail little to devote much space to the few and scattered Quakers, Moravians, Reformed, or other minor sects which, from first to last through the whole Pioneer region represented small colonies or groups rather than the settlers who constituted the majority and upon whom fell the real Pioneer work. The small, as must always be the case, merged itself into the larger or the average.

Attention has been called to the fact that the amount of property owned by any given denomination constituted no guide as to numbers or activity. This was shown by the fact that in 1850 the Catholics, although they had in the entire country only one-eleventh as many churches as the Methodists with only one-seventh of the number of sittings, owned nearly sixty-five per cent of the property held by the two bodies, thus showing that religious activity was almost wholly a matter of men and not of accumulated capital. Each of the three dominant sects in the areas under study — which together constituted not less than two-thirds of the religious population — relied almost wholly in the first instance upon public facilities in the shape of school-houses or courthouses, supplemented in season by the accommodations which nature provided. They were thus enabled to carry their equipment with them, almost to the same extent that the sheep carries its clothing or the oyster its house. This not only had its advantages in dealing with their own, but, being propagandists, the instant readiness enabled them to attract many from outside their own ranks.

## Church Buildings Not Necessary

The time came ten or twenty years later when, with the increase of numbers, this was impossible; but in the beginning religion, like other things human, adjusted itself to the policy of first come first served; besides, before the change came the mischief had been done to other bodies and the balance could not be redressed.







*THE CHARACTER OF THE CLERGY*

AFTER the indications thus far given of the class of men who constituting the majority of the clergy ministered to the wants and fairly met the demands, though not the full needs, of the time, it is not necessary to analyze them at great length. As a body they met none of the demands which historic Protestantism had always made upon its accepted teachers. They were in no sense a class set apart by origin, ability, social standing, prestige, leadership, education, interest in and knowledge of, and the best learning available to their time. Above all things they preached always and everywhere, but they produced no outstanding sermons.

In the carefree days of the Established Church in Virginia and Maryland, or among the Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Reformed in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, but especially in the cultured Congregationalism or Unitarianism of New England, however narrow or opinionated it might be, there was effort so to select and train the clergy that the best available should be chosen. The office itself raised its holders above the mass about them. They were a class apart, commanding respect because even under hard conditions they maintained their dignity not alone by assertiveness or ecclesiastical power, but by character and learning.

It was left for the Pioneer to be thrown back in religious instruction upon leaders and teachers of a mediocrity of

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almost the commonest order. They belonged (I am speaking of the active forces represented by the three bodies already analyzed) to a time when orthodoxy and zeal were the principal, almost the only, standards. They dealt in the commonplaces fixed for them on enduring lines by Wesley and Campbell, or in the recondite abstractions of Calvin. They could not — as has been expected from the clergy during the whole of Christian history — lead their people into that knowledge for which even they hungered and thirsted. They could not teach the aspiring boy the science of the time, the botany, the geology, the zoölogy, or the larger geography, or instruct him in language and mathematics as their predecessors on other scenes had always done, and thus send him forth better for these efforts prepared to carry on the torch of learning let it burn never so dimly.

If these men had lived and ruled in that far-distant period (falsely known as the Dark Ages) with the same power that in their own time they exercised so narrowly, history could not have recorded the fact that with all its drawbacks, ignorances, and oppressions, learning still survived and that through it came in due time that most magnificent revival of knowledge of art, architecture, and science, seen since the days of Pericles.

It is still necessary to bear in mind that during all this new Pioneer period anterior to the War of Independence and, especially after the second war with Great Britain, the two lines of intellectual training and religious activity ran parallel. They differed in method but most especially



## The Comparative Absence of Learning

in the relation they bore to the clergy. The historical sects still insisted upon having leaders as well instructed as their period and opportunities permitted; they believed in education and, while sticking closely to their own traditions, made every effort to seek out and employ for the work in hand those best fitted according to accepted standards.

The other or popular sects assimilated themselves so closely to their rude surroundings that they permitted their environment to govern their religion rather than to make systematic effort to adjust it to the higher intellectual standards of which they neither knew nor hardly desired to know. They grew so rapidly in numbers, so quickly gained importance and even dominance, that they had little opportunity and soon came to have less inclination to lead the religious progress of their time : they were prone to remain followers. They believed earnestly in their mission and interpreted it as necessary to save the great numbers who flocked to them rather than to risk the loss of souls while waiting for more refined or historic methods.

### *THE COMPARATIVE ABSENCE OF LEARNING*

BOTH these types, so differing in ideas, policies, and methods, were equally devoted to the fundamental Protestant dogmas. They worshipped the same God without the intervention of the Virgin or Saints; hoped for and believed in the same heaven; dreaded the same hell; so that outside or independent criticism of articles of faith or practice could not affect or even reach either the one or the other. When the fortress was attacked all within it resisted the

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common enemy; when the fortress was saved they turned upon each other with renewed energy.

Neither the better nor the worse instructed knew anything about the religious ferment which was making itself felt in the world outside. If Unitarianism had been heard of, it was put down as worse and more dangerous than bald Atheism. Neither the Oxford movement which, in its initial and creative stages had by the secession of John Henry Newman run its concrete course by 1845, nor had any of the great works that were the Pioneers of the Higher Criticism been so much as heard of, much less read or known before the end of the Civil War in 1865; and yet, looking back at the questions raised so reverently by scholarship the long list of epoch-making books which appeared within this period and aroused the profound attention and interest of students in Europe and the older parts of America must now excite the wonder of a population only two generations away from their beginning.

This conclusion is illustrated by the mention of only a few of the great biblical studies of the time :

Robert Chambers' <i>Vestiges of Creation</i>	1844
Strauss' <i>Life of Christ</i> , translated by George Eliot	1846
Greg's <i>Creed of Christendom</i>	1850
Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i>	1859
Oxford <i>Essays &amp; Reviews</i>	1860
Bishop Colenso's <i>Pentateuch</i>	1862
Sir Charles Lyell's <i>Antiquity of Man</i>	1863
Renan's <i>Life of Jesus</i>	1863
Professor J. R. Seeley's <i>Ecce Homo</i>	1865

## The Comparative Absence of Learning

This fact, however, is in nowise surprising; it was, perhaps, even fortunate rather than otherwise. These people had to do so much rough spade work both industrial and intellectual that new causes of contention or misunderstanding thrown into their lives at that time before they had been prepared for them by thought or education might have so shaken the faith of vast numbers as to produce serious results both individual and social. Hard as it is to make apology for ignorance, it was, perhaps, better that these worthy people, struggling to subdue a continent, should like those of all other ages get their enlightenment when by the gradual extension of the zones of knowledge it slowly filtered into their minds after they had done the urgent task that lay at hand.

As none of the authors mentioned could perhaps have found in person anywhere within these remote areas a considerable circle of receptive, sympathetic, and understanding minds, it is clear that their works if generally circulated and read, when issued, would have been lost in the forlornness of the surroundings. It is natural to look back upon conditions, social, intellectual, or political, even those economic or sanitary, and to express pity for our immediate forebears who had to live under them; but it cannot be forgotten that progress of any kind is only safe when it so comes that the people affected by it can assimilate it and fit it into the currents of their complicated traditions. Much unhappiness and strife, probably even many wars, might have been averted if the world since 1776 and 1789 had been less insistent upon the virtue of popular institu-

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tions and their application, in our accepted forms, to peoples not only unfitted for them but wholly alien to them.

### *NARROW RANGE OF THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE*

WITH all the devotion of the time to theology and practically nothing else, it is a cause for regret that there could not have come within the scope of these people some of the really fine Puritan literature at its best estate or the works of the best Protestant writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than to be confined to recondite and un-understandable glosses on Calvin, the commonplaces of Wesley and his followers, and the worse than puerile products of Campbell and his sectarians. Curiously enough these people, struggling on the frontier, were almost tied down to the narrower foreign writers, many of them remote in both time and motive. Other than the Presbyterians, who by reason of devotion to the masterpieces of their leaders mostly Scotch or Swiss in origin, there seem to have been practically no American writers on pure theology who were entitled to be called authorities.

The commentaries and Bible dictionaries, small as was the number in use, were English and mostly Wesleyan, and nothing was more assured than that these would be anathema to the Baptists and Christians with their united emphasis upon an outward rite (immersion) as the one thing needful. Incomplete though these books of reference were, to judge them by modern standards would be essentially unfair. Written and issued long before there was any real criticism on biblical subjects, they did bring to their readers

## Devotion and Hardships of the Clergy

an amount of knowledge, geographical and topographical, that was most useful. They ran rather overmuch to learned or pedantic linguistic distinctions or differences far beyond the narrow learning of the times; but, though restricted and partisan, they were at least fairly honest efforts to tell what was then known. Many zealous persons resented them because of an insistence that as the Bible was the very word of God (the *ipsissima verba*, as delivered on the Mount) it did not need any interpretation by man. The biographical books of the day were mostly lives of Bishops, or Presiding Elders, or of circuit riders like Peter Cartwright or puny narratives of adventure by men of a mediocre order.

### THE DEVOTION AND THE HARDSHIPS OF THE CLERGY

THE physical demands upon the clergy of that time were exacting. Paid almost nothing, compelled to hold a large number of services, often in widely separated districts, deprived to a considerable extent of family life, subjected to many strong temptations, they had as little opportunity as they had desire for study. With sermons ranging from and hour to two hours twice on a Sunday, with long-winded class meetings thrown in, and elaborate prayer meetings on Wednesday nights (the minister's off-hand prayers at each average Sunday service aggregated from half an hour to an hour) the lot of these men, from a worldly point of view, was not entirely happy and certainly less so from the intellectual.

It must be said for them that within the limits of their

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capabilities they were devoted to their work in a way that was worthy of a higher recognition, and that everything considered their moral character stood up to the average test of a priesthood throughout the ages. There were black sheep enough to emphasize the human nature of their class; probably in quite as large a proportion as in the monasteries of the Middle Ages, or among the priesthood who was supposed to be so corrupt before the days of Luther, Calvin, Henry the Eighth, and John Knox, but greater than in the Puritan times in England, Virginia, or New England.

The drawback was monumental ignorance emphasized by inability and lack of desire to emerge from this condition. The wonder is that it was at all possible for the church to hold its more intelligent or ambitious laymen. That it did so was due to the depth and sincerity of faith existent in every class in these communities: not to its spiritual heads. These laymen were the leaders in all secular activities and were, by native qualities and the strength which makes real men, superior to those under whose ministrations they sat. Among them were those who, in every branch of industry and all professions, not only made their own records, but were responsible collectively for the progress of their communities and States. They have left an imperishable record of their achievements, less as individuals than as a type; and they are entitled to much of the praise for work done that has been given to the circuit rider and the preachers even lower in the scale of intelligence and originality. These men were the lawyers, doctors, judges, public men, soldiers, farmers, artisans, the

## Devotion and Hardships of the Clergy

budding manufacturers of their day and they made themselves felt individually and collectively.

But the preachers of the popular denominations have passed into a limbo from which nothing can rescue them. Not a religious utterance of the early men of this class, within the great Pioneer domain of nearly a half million square miles has survived. Not a dozen of them are recognized as passing figures of interest even within the history of the three denominations in which they wrought. They did not, because they could not, take the lead in education; their sermons were mainly, almost universally, copies of doctrinal or ceremonial utterances without the possibility of an original idea. Even their reading of the scriptures, their elocution, was generally beneath the standard of the average schoolboy of the time; and they knew less than nothing of science, or of politics outside their exhortations or efforts for a given party. So, what was there to give them a real position to say nothing of leaving a mark upon their time? Happily, they were not permitted to have any distinctive garb to give them even a sartorial standing, and their families like themselves were not generally high in the social scale of the day. They were birds of passage : here to-day, gone to-morrow.

I cannot too strongly emphasize the fact, recognized by all competent students of the time, that these observations and judgments, true though they are, may seem severe. They apply only to the popular sects and, as we must deal with averages, there were occasional exceptions even among them. It must be borne in mind that the historical sects

## Pioneer Foundations

were gleaners; that they did not appeal to the distinctively Pioneer mind; that their fields of labor were in the towns; that they carried with them their own customs and manners of worship and their own clergy; that they were, as a rule, able to command assistance from their old homes, or from missionary societies, general or local; and that, as an effect, they were the same settled, staid people when they landed in a new community as when they had pulled up their roots in an old one. They had the Pioneer instinct, developed in their own way, in industry, in education, and social life, but not in theological methods. It is well, also, to remember that a considerable proportion of the membership and the conservatism of the popular sects was drawn from a class of people who were driven into them, for a time, in order to find religious association of any kind. A large number of these were able so to modify the unfavorable conditions about them as to introduce, out of due time, into these sects a stage of development that raised them quickly to a higher level. It would, indeed, have been a sad state of affairs if this had not been the case.

### *DEPENDENCE UPON ONE BOOK*

AMONG such a people as that with which we are dealing, with forms of faith scarcely less primitive than those existent on the Day of Pentecost, and with such a clergy, it is easy for the student without any severe exercise of imagination to feel even better than he could understand by description the religious services under examination. There was just one book : the Bible, out of which came both the



## Dependence Upon One Book

theological and the religious motive (the former generally overlaying the latter), the science, the rules of practical life, the consolations necessary for men in this world, and a conception of rewards and punishments in the world to come.

The actual laws governing society had been changed, the common law having steadily displaced the Mosaic dispensation, although the superiority of the latter with all the incongruities incident to its application to modern and occidental conditions was often held up as the ideal towards which men should struggle. This Bible was, therefore, the only authority. Its teachings or narratives, whether in morals or history, were the last word because collectively they were the only word. It was not to be studied by human aids because study might imply doubt or raise a question.

There was little place even for the commentators and none for a Paley with his *Evidences of Christianity*. The Bible, read in all its literalness, was accepted as a whole and in its separate parts : every book, chapter, verse, or text, was its own infallible evidence. This unquestioned acceptance excluded all other facts or speculations about God, the Saviour, the fate of men in this world or the next; so that the preacher from it had before him all the fundamentals of his system. As there is not much room for discussion when facts are unchangeable and universally received, when conclusions are inevitable, he was thrown back upon the interpretation of chapter or text as sustaining the position of his own sect, as supporting or confuting

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the Pope, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, or Campbell, or his own neighbor.

While these were men and so might be mistaken, the annalists, prophets, singers, evangelists, apostles, and disciples were divine and, writing with the pen of God, every utterance must be believed without question or challenge. Thus, if the scope for discussion and explanation was narrow on one side, it was infinite in range and quantity on the other. The Bible, it was universally agreed, was the only rule of life, but as experience has shown every rule may have a thousand limitations. Therefore, from the same premises it was possible to expound, to agree, to diverge, until, in Milton's phrase, the whole might end "in wandering mazes lost."

### BEAUTY NOT RECOGNIZED

It was not to be expected that these people, in such a time with such a faith, should have anticipated the time when the Bible in all its ramifications would become the best known, perhaps, the most perfectly understood product of the universal human mind; but there must be regret that from being the highest expression of human morals it was made a football for dissension, for unprofitable dialectics, for speculation about God and his decrees, without any purpose more useful than the assertion of doctrines without foundation or proof. As an effect, there was seldom heard any argument or discussion that recognized or set forth the beauty of the Scriptures. Their marvellous imagery and poetry made little conscious appeal. They were

## Beauty Not Recognized

more likely to be slighted in favor of some passage that expressed the anger of God or expiated upon the eternal punishment of the wicked.

In many cases the Bible was studied less as a consolation, less as the actual word of God, than as an arsenal to supply arguments for or against some of the dogmas that entered into the very constitution of a sect and through it into the lives of the individuals who relied upon this interpretation as confirming their beliefs or as a solace in their troubles. It was part and parcel — perhaps the culminating point — of the greatest movement in human history under which a book became not merely a creed and a code of morals, but the only authority deemed necessary for the teaching and the happiness of men here and hereafter. No such sight will probably ever be seen again among men.

The forms developed in Christian worship, that exposition of beliefs, symbols, ceremonies, metaphors, and signs, that either revealed beauty or concealed credulity had undergone many changes since the Reformation. It took a long time to shake off even those seriously condemned as superstitious or idolatrous, and this process went forward with varying results until nearly all of the forms and imagery of service had disappeared. If the original reformers discarded much of it, and the Presbyterians and Huguenots still more, it might have been thought that the Puritans had completed the process.

Much of this inherent nobility of service remained in those bodies in which rituals survived all vicissitudes. The Evangelical movement removed a good deal more of what

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was supposed to be surplusage so that they accomplished the great feat of robbing the English Prayerbook of still more of its exquisite beauty. The New England Puritans and the Presbyterians sheared off still more so that not much of the original remained in the popular sects. As religion, merging itself still closer into the untranslatable subtilities of theology, started across the American wilderness and was finally taken over by the popular sects public service, often without the aid of a church, consecration, historic relation, altar or ritual had become, almost universally, as bare of ceremony or beauty as a Quaker meeting or a log-rolling.

### SOME OF THE ROUTINE OF SERVICES

THE preacher in the Pioneer area became merely a preacher and without distinctive pastoral gifts, or any outward sartorial sign from hat rim to shoe sole to distinguish him from a member of his congregation. Even the long coat, the Geneva band, and the typical collar had been lost. This minister had no pulpit, often not even the simplest reading-desk. The selection of the Scriptures was made mainly at haphazard — most of the order inherent in the calendar, including Easter and Christmas having been eliminated. This Scripture reading was the one severe trial to the man and woman with ears, or respect for their native language. The drawl and hesitation, the blunders in pronunciation and emphasis, made it a cross for the congregation and a plague for the really religious.

The prayer which followed was one of the wonders of

## Some of the Routine of Services

the Pioneer worship. It was extemporaneous, seldom less than half an hour in length, without system or arrangement, full of vain repetitions, omitting nothing on earth, in the waters under the earth, or in the heavens above, from the things either asked for or execrated.

When it ended the second hymn was lined out and on rare occasions the tune, generally one of the oldest and rudest to which it had been set, was pitched with a tuning fork in the hands of a primitive music teacher. There was no organ or other instrument because it was not known, but also for the reason that it was as much forbidden as if it had been an embodied "shall not" from the Decalogue. Now and again there would be some attempt to get a choir; but, generally speaking, this too was ranked among things forbidden or unholy. A theory is often propounded in modern discussions over the decline of religion, that it is due to the abandonment of congregational singing. Persons not so old as to have forgotten some of the afflictions incident to youth are seldom heard in approval of this suggestion: they recall that, of all examples of discord known, such singing was certainly the most perfect.

The minimum length of a sermon at the morning meeting was an hour, this being a concession gradually made on the westward march of the Pioneer. Its character both in matter and manner has been already indicated. Generally it was doctrinal, which made it contentious, or horrific, sometimes both, full of almost innumerable repetitions and, generally speaking, as empty as an eggshell. As a moral admonition, it ruined the beauty and effectiveness of the

## Pioneer Foundations

Scriptures. Now and again some bright young minister would memorize a sermon by some well-known clergyman. Charles Spurgeon (being far enough away to make detection difficult until the preacher had gone forward before some better-read layman should discover the pious fraud) was the favorite arsenal for such supplies. In fact, these were rather welcome as a relief from the ordinary discourses which might be expected or given.

Another prayer about fifteen or twenty minutes in length followed, with probably two more hymns, then the sermon, then the doxology, and the service would conclude with a long off-hand benediction. When from two and a half to three hours had been consumed the end would finally come; sometimes, the congregation would adjourn for a picnic dinner (often with the cheerful background of the graveyard) and at two o'clock again take up the tale with another service occupying about an hour and a half. The latter was affected mainly in the churches and grounds of the United Presbyterians; in most cases children had to attend these services and were expected to sit up as straight and remain as quiet as under the old Blue Law days of New England. Generally speaking, except for the class meeting, the congregation would have a respite from service, which had begun with Sunday school at nine o'clock in the morning, until evening at early candlelighting in winter, thus conserving about another hour and a half.

As these various services were held in the schoolhouses, the seats of which were as ingeniously devised as other instruments of torture, the fallacy of calling Sunday a day

## The Auxiliary Services

of rest is easily apparent. If there was more than one denomination in a given neighborhood they would sometimes alternate or dovetail their services, except now and then when more than one schoolhouse was available.

### THE AUXILIARY SERVICES

THE class meeting — distinctively Methodist in name — has been greatly modified. In the times under consideration it was in reality, though not in name, a form of confession, the principal difference being that it was as public as if proclaimed from the housetops. All members were called in succession by the leader, with admonitory introductions insisting that they should relate the religious experience of the previous week. As a rule, these generally fell into a fixed formula — something to be recited on each succeeding occasion so that the knowing one could predict in advance the sins to be confessed. It was often thought by the ungodly or the mocking that they were far more honored in what they concealed than in what they revealed. Under different names other popular denominations would have services with purposes not radically different from the class meeting.

Thus, Sunday after Sunday was filled so far as public appearances were concerned; but even then the tale was not told. If there were any odd minutes or hours, it was expected, especially from children, that the time should be devoted to Bible reading or to memorizing verses against the next session of Sunday school. No child of pious parents was permitted to play, it being a favorite item in Wes-

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ley's teaching that children were neither "to play nor to cry." Some parents offered small but tempting money rewards for committing the New Testament to memory, a process which might proceed merrily through the Synoptics and until the opening of the fourth Gospel was reached. Nothing was, of course, then known in all the Pioneer area about the doubtful historicity of this book, but as it, more than its predecessors, was filled with theology and speculation, and was in the Bible it seemed to be a favorite for reading and for texts. As the childish mind, accustomed to the sublunary and the clear, generally balked at the first fourteen verses, the prize was seldom awarded. If this failed, the poor struggling child would be stopped by the lofty, soul-raising but hardly easy philosophy of St. Paul, or impaled upon some of the horns of the Apocalypse. In any event, the child had happily been saved from appearance upon some youthful playground, or kept from guilty contact with that nature to which sunshine and all the glory of outdoors might invite.

### THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

No account of the observances of Sunday would be complete that did not take account of the Sunday school. Uninviting as are the International Lessons, which all children are now expected to study or recite at the same hour the country over, there has been at least some improvement in the conduct of that hour for children. The origin of these lessons is credited to Robert Raikes. In Pioneer times Sunday schools were frankly sectarian : avowed vestibules



## The Sunday School

to each particular denomination. Contained in the little books with backs of mottled paper, there were the stories of good boys and girls, far-off imitations of "Sanford and Merton"; but they were Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or, in due time, Campbellite boys and girls. As they were over-good, they were doomed to die early before temptation and sin had had a chance to put their souls into peril. As for stories dealing with the lives of ordinary persons, wholesome and healthy everyday people, whether mature in years or only real boys and girls, these were among the wicked for whom there was no hope outside admission through the gates of an always yawning hell.

Perhaps nothing in all the annals of printing was ever more puny morally or more contemptible intellectually than these little books. Compared with them, the later dime-novel was a lofty, ennobling example of literary art and merit. Happily, these examples could not survive to dilute the minds of succeeding generations, as no library on earth would be so reckless as to preserve them. No new eruption of Vesuvius could possibly reveal to the world a human being engaged in a pastime more belittling than that of reading an old-time Sunday school book. One publishing society, no doubt Unitarian or at least remote from the scenes of this study, did once take the risk of printing Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Celestial Railroad*. Perhaps the only demand ever made for it, outside the orthodox precincts of its origin, was when many years later the bibliomaniacs gave vogue to its few surviving copies as a first edition of one of the works of the great novelist and de-

## Pioneer Foundations

lineator of human nature. It was distinctly against all rules to read in such surroundings and under such auspices anything written by a genius.

If hatred and distrust could ever be justified, they would have done credit to the thousands of Pioneer boys and girls to whom, ill-treated and over-worked at home, ill-taught at school, the preacher's message was to harp constantly upon the text "he who spareth the rod hateth his son", or its Hudibrastic derivative: "spare the rod and spoil the child." If a child received from the average pulpit a kind word, an encouragement to do well, anything to indicate so far as the public or the world would know that it was other than filled with total depravity: an irredeemable imp of Satan, foreordained to a punishment it could not avoid or avert, and of which it could really know nothing (and all this, too, before it was much more than out of small clothes) if it was not continually warned to flee the wrath to come when its one need was relief from the wrath lying all about it, in the home and the school, then that child was one of the exceptions, the marvels of the day. The suffering child was, nearly always, the standing awful example.

That it should have taken two hundred and fifty years to kill such a theology is one of the wonders of the Christian era.

### *THE REVIVAL METHODS OF THE DAY*

IN any description of the religious conditions of the time some attention must be devoted to revival methods. The

## The Revival Methods of the Day

camp meeting gradually wore itself out. As the fervor of the earlier part of the century was somewhat abated, as changes in industrial development were made and settlement entered regions of greater climatic extremes, there was no leisure in the summer for those elaborate gatherings along the banks of some stream. They had gradually got themselves away from the religious category into the dramatic — often into the comic. Illinois and Iowa, being prairie regions, were never favored spots for their development and they soon disappeared.

Their place was taken by the revival, generally scheduled for midwinter. Now one denomination would conduct it, then another; sometimes they took weekly or annual turns. In general where the sects were fairly divided, and before any of them had a building of its own, they held union meetings. There were nearly always difficulties in the way. It was not easy for the Armenianism of Wesley fully to coalesce with the rigid Calvinism of the Baptists or the rather shambling, half-way dogmas of the Campbellites; but these bars were generally leaped. Such a revival would be held on the nights of every day (Sunday sometimes excepted) and the preachers contributory to the localities interested would officiate together by turns. A sort of general policy would be outlined (what in modern diplomacy or business would be called "a gentleman's agreement") one that made it necessary to let sectarian differences and issues lie in abeyance until the end of the aggressive campaign, or, as it would now be called, the drive. On such occasions there were few of these fundamental differences. There

## Pioneer Foundations

was universal agreement about heaven and hell as terminal stations for humanity in the next world, and some understanding about the ways of advent or escape, so that the individual signboards giving directions might be removed for the time.

Whether one denomination or more took part generally two and often three preachers were engaged. There were occasional special revivalists who made it their business during the winter to go from place to place; but, generally speaking, the task was undertaken by the circuit rider and the regular clergy of the participating sects. Now and again the exhorter would assist, but being only a local preacher and unlicensed he seldom took part, except as a sort of whipper-in.

It required some time to get fairly under way (to "warm up", as the phrase was used by the vulgar or the mocker) and the first week was mainly given over to this process. The primary object within the purview of a series of revival meetings was to bring home to the guilty sinner a recognition of his perverseness — of which he was supposed to have knowledge from instinct — and thus to put him in the way of thinking out his remedies. This was known as "conviction" which was not taken so seriously that he was asked or expected to commit himself. It was calculated from experience that, out of the auditors in such meetings, enough would have become so interested or alarmed that at the end of a week a number would announce their entrance upon this stage. They might come forward to the mourner's bench, as it was called, anywhere in or between

## The Revival Methods of the Day

these successive steps. When this point had been reached, personal effort was applied to each penitent or inquirer in order to fix the mind more firmly upon the object in hand. This might be made by lay persons of either sex — generally well chosen for zeal and assured character as “professors” of religion. Often this resort would be crowded or pushed by other worshippers, whether inquirers or merely spectators, when the admonition would come from the preacher: “don’t crowd the mourners” — a phrase which, as dialect, was applied to many phases of life.

If it had not been an actual fact, attested winter after winter during the first ten years of every interior settlement made in the Pioneer region between 1830 and 1865 (ten years being the average time required for the building of churches by the various denominations) no personal assurance by a spectator of the capacity of the schoolhouse, a log or frame building probably 20 x 25 feet intended for about forty pupils, during one of these series of protracted meetings, would be believed. With an outside temperature approaching twenty degrees below zero, somewhat modified inside by a great old-fashioned box stove continually stoked with dry wood; lighted with a few guttering tallow candles, generally in the attitude of the leaning towers of medieval Italy; crowded with from one hundred and fifty to two hundred human beings, young and old, of both sexes, probably more than half of them indifferent to the services, save as they afforded amusement or contributed to the theatrical or the bizarre; a preacher screeching his maledictions, daring to pronounce the judgments of God upon the poor

## Pioneer Foundations

mortals before him, who, scared into hysterics or madness, were held in leash to this exhibition of the monstrous — all these features certainly united to present a sinister picture of that great religion which, dealing with each individual soul among mankind, was supposed to be founded upon love, thought, reason, and responsibility.

### *DIVIDING THE SPOIL OF SOULS*

ALL this time the call to repentance from the preacher in the form of pictures of the exceeding wickedness of the world, the delights of heaven, and the terrors of hell would go on together or in quick succession. Whether the subject was the one or the other, the judgments were delivered in a raucous voice, one that had to make itself heard over the shouts of joy or despair, the hallelujahs or amens, the shrieks of women sometimes fainting away in mental terror, or in actual epilepsy, with the accompanying efforts of the revivalist or his co-workers to alarm the recalcitrant, to welcome the convinced penitent, or to encourage the anxious, inquiring soul. If such a scene could have been exhibited in any other cause or in any other place, it would have been called pandemonium.

No mob, however intent on some purpose, whether resolved or sudden, could have been more representative of disorder; such an exhibition in a ward of an insane asylum would have been met by a general resort to the straight-jacket. It was here the assured, the calculated, effect. It was the manifestation of hope or fear in persons who, accepting as unquestioned certain articles of faith, must

## Dividing the Spoil of Souls

according to their own view and the methods current in the time be aroused in this way. In the midst of such an exhibition of evident pleasure at the prospect of salvation, or of abject fear lest after all God and the devil might combine to prevent the fruition of these new-born hopes, would be heard the request for the prayers of all, both public and private, the asking from the preacher or the sympathetic helper the aid that was so much needed just then — all these accompanied a two-hour struggle often prolonged night after night over three or four weeks.

At its end, if it was a union effort, followed the division of the spoil of souls among the participating sects, each of which became either claimant for its own or bidder for a share. Here the result of organization or system became apparent. Many motives, some of them wholly worldly, entered into the reckoning. To one person baptism in some special form would appeal. If the Baptist sought his allotment of converts he had only one way; but his power to convince lay in the practical immediate certainty of salvation, regardless of lapses, under a fairly emphatic warrant of either probable or assured foreordination from all eternity. The decrees of God were thus underwritten in case of immersion according to the proper form and rite, which must be the Baptist one in order to insure efficacy. It also meant reception into the household of faith without question or delay.

The Methodist had his arguments, his lures, his positive promises; but his appeal to the zeal of the new-found convert was somewhat broader. He could offer a choice be-

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tween three equally effective methods of baptism, a less rigid doctrine, and a watchfulness on the part of all co-religionists during the six months probation when the right-hand of fellowship would be publicly extended : thus providing two ceremonials instead of one. It had the advantage, too, of being rather more sociable, more democratic in its organization and carried with it more chances for recognition or preferment within the body itself.

The Campbellites, claiming to represent a newer and simpler form of the common faith, generally took those less dogmatic or of simpler mind to whom the personal character and methods of Campbell and the arguments about the authority of the New Testament made their special appeal.

When all the converts who stuck to their promises had been persuaded from one motive or another, from their own deliberate choice, by the allurements of social position or employment, or even by the claims of love, to choose their banner, their baptism and reception, according to well-prescribed rites, was next in order. With the Methodists, of whom almost none chose immersion, its converts were received at the closing meeting of the revival or at a subsequent one with a degree of quiet and dignity hardly to be expected from such a demonstrative people. With the Baptists, resort was had on the first available Sunday to the neighboring stream or pond where a hole, probably three feet by six in size, was made in the two-foot thick ice. All converts, dressed in their Sunday best, were lined up on the banks with a great crowd — drawn from all denominations, or from none — which posted itself round



## After the Excitement Ended

about while the half-drowned, half-frozen victims, avowing their faith anew by shouts and hallelujahs, came up in succession. For them a solemn and sincere ceremony had been performed, but for the majority of onlookers it had the attraction of personal interest in the baptized or of a trick scene in a circus. The Campbellites baptized in the same way but they were apt to await a more propitious or comfortable season when the spring came.

### AFTER THE EXCITEMENT ENDED

AFTER this excitement was at an end and its emotions had subsided, life in such a community settled down gradually to its old level. There was a double watchfulness, both by the godly and the ungodly, over the converts, many of whom, it may be said in passing, had passed through the same ordeal except as to baptism, time after time, often joining themselves to several sects before settling down into one, or backsliding permanently from all. I have described the revival meeting at some length because for more than a century it was the accepted proselyting agency employed by Christian denominations representing about three-fourths of the people living in the vast areas between the Allegheny Mountains on the east and the Missouri River on the west extending into Tennessee and beyond on the south.

Now, who were the people that had to be moved in religion by hysteria or emotionalism gone mad? Were they some band of outlaws or bandits, unregenerate heathen, worshipping stocks and stones, thus brought to a realizing sense of their own shortcomings and of God's mercy, and

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of faith in a newly-revealed scheme by which they could command forgiveness of their sins and personal salvation? It must be confessed that no such charge can be made against them. They were, for the most part, ordinary industrious men and chaste hard-working women; all in the main honest, well-meaning, patriotic, firmly grounded in the essentials of the Christian faith, as they knew it, ready and resolved to do the right as God gave them to see it. They were of all social classes, but with accepted leaders. They had in them the sturdy elements of manhood that made them conscientious in personal conduct, living "in love and charity with their neighbors".

As straight forward as men can be, they were ready to do their duty in that state to which God had called them; and yet, in what are thought the most serious affairs in which humanity can engage they deemed it necessary to pursue methods which, if they had read about them in some profane history, would have been put down as mummeries based upon the lowest superstitions. It constitutes a chapter in the psychology of the human mind, which in time to come will be little less mysterious than the most intricate miracle set forth in Holy Writ or other records of the acts or doings of any founder or disciple of religion.

### PSYCHOLOGY OF THE REVIVAL

THE historic denominations, coming in due time into the same neighborhoods as gleaners, pursued their own methods. They held no prolonged revival meetings, made no appeals to excitement, no more indulged themselves in eccen-

## Psychology of the Revival

tricies in religion than in business or any other relation in life. And yet they waxed in numbers and strength. That they sometimes gathered into their communions some of the persons who had been influenced toward religious action by the methods described was doubtless true; but these came without solicitation, following their own inclinations. They furnished no food for melodrama, and going forward in their own ways contributed in the end far more than their proportion to both the Christian and civilizing influences of the time and place, as well as to education and to orderly and ordered life. It may be said of them that if they chose the more easy part, it was, like that of Mary, also the better one.

In those days no serious study had yet been made of the general moral effect upon a given small community of such an overturn of all its habits of life, such an interference with the natural course of human development. The good people who, like John Bunyan, had by perverted imaginations driven themselves into the arms of despair were no better; if anything, the development of the lowest order of rant and cant developed a hypocrisy that might otherwise have lain dormant or been repressed; the indifferent were not shaken for any long time out of their settled indifference; the wanton were confirmed in their wantonness and, as careful scientific observation has since confirmed, there was a tendency for sexual disorders to increase rather than diminish; while petty theft, which was the most prevalent crime, was likely to expand as the detective agencies of society were lulled to sleep.

## Pioneer Foundations

After such an exhibition, everything considered and from the largest view, the last state of such a community was often worse than the first. Regular study, in school or out, was likely to be suspended, or at least interfered with; the wholesome pleasures of life, such as dancing, harmless games, or the presentation of plays, were suppressed and, as an effect of the animal hymnology of the time, music was left in probably a lower state of development and practice than at any other time known to modern history. A Western people cannot for any long period turn themselves in all of their component communities into howling dervishes without producing distinct harm and impeding the growth of better tastes, improved manners, and higher morals. When, in any age, such methods have prevailed over a long period its boasted progress, if it is made at all, comes in spite of them and not through them.

### *THE PENALTIES OF SUCH A THEOLOGY*

IN reality no stronger evidence can be adduced of the inherent ability of the Pioneer to triumph over unwholesome conditions than the fact that he could bear up under such a religion and still have heart, mind, and soul fit for high things. They themselves held the potency of sane growth : their laws were just; their industries were settled; their education, in spite of defects, had high ideals; and, victims though they were of isolation they could o'erleap the obstacles that nature had set up, so that when after 1865 revolution finally came, they were able gradually to develop taste and capacity for seeing and understanding the

## The Penalties of Such a Theology

good and the beautiful, and thus to show how flexible and reconstructive human nature can be when, like the tree, it breaks the bands that have held it down or impeded its development.

While New England and the older parts of the country were getting the benefit of a broad culture, flowing in from everywhere, promoted by science, education, even religion itself, the South and the new regions of the West, each in their successive zones, were passing through a form scarcely less primitive than that which had hampered the earliest days of settlement when the Indian was a constant physical peril, transcending in importance all others and postponing the positive growth of mind and soul. The physical menaces only disappeared to have their places taken by those securely padlocked shackles of the mind. So long as in Hazlitt's words, "this world was looked upon as the vestibule of hell", balanced human nature could not be expected to rebel successfully against the hard, grinding decrees of a fate looked upon as fixed and determinate.

It would be almost impossible to describe, much less to exaggerate, the awful, the depressing effect of this abuse of the very name of religion — so gloomy, so unintelligent, so unnatural was it. It was so much the perversion of faith; it was so unforgiving and uncharitable; so burdened with worldliness and a selfishness which, under the guise of a desire for personal salvation in a future state, might sacrifice the happiness of others in all real and possible worlds; it so promoted that abnormal fear of death, ever present in thought and word, that in the best men and

## Pioneer Foundations

women it became so oppressive as to be dominating. It produced in the bad and designing a cant so general and so profound as to put it beyond the imagination of all not subject to the dispiriting necessity for seeing it as it was on the frontier.

Before Puritanism left New England, upon which it was gradually relaxing its hold, and, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, it carried its worst features beyond the mountains, and there perpetuated out of due time the growth of rational religious sentiment in a wholesome, natural way. Just as other moral, social, and educational ideas were getting a foothold of their own, they were doomed to be overlaid or smothered in a vast, unwholesome, uninterrupted exercise of wild emotion. It required nearly three generations to redress this balance; even when this process had been fairly accomplished, it left a people open to every kind of appeal, political or social, theological or anti-theological, financial or industrial, the prey of credulities and delusions running the gamut through a great number of petty personal sects, Mormonism, spiritualism, and phrenology.

If the study now known as psychology shall ever develop into the real science which even now it affects to be, one of the great services it may do is to determine why a strong, valiant, adventurous people, prudent, really anxious to do right, well-grounded in faith, not profaning God's ordinances or working violence either to Him or their fellows, doing their duty as they saw it under hard circumstances and in surroundings of extreme difficulty, should

## Theology of the Colonist and Pioneer Compared

have been subjected to that untoward fate (the newly extended reign of bigotry) of living in the midst of ideas and ideals that had so long been dead that they deserved nothing except burial and annihilation. That the beauty, the poetry, the art of a great religion should have been expelled in order to keep it at the lowest standards fixed for it in the rude times of transition and violence by Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, and Edwards, to say nothing of numberless imitators of inferior type, left to the world a work of reconstruction hardly less imperative or less difficult than that which lay before these men themselves when in their own early days before they had become drunken with power they set forth to correct ancient abuses. It seems hard that the evil these men did should live while the good should be interred with their bones.

### *THEOLOGY OF THE COLONIST AND THE PIONEER COMPARED*

THE minute division of Protestantism into sects, each of which in that day of an exaggerated individualism was rising into power and asserting itself in so many ways, was the principal reason for the intellectual weakness of religion in the Pioneer life of that day. In all the earlier history of the country there was a leadership in religion that was fairly educated; that tended to reflect the sentiment of the best; and that sometimes found expression in sound preaching to an understanding taste. When this standard was displaced, when ignorance, pretension, and assertiveness made a new one, it was not because religion

## Pioneer Foundations

appealed to a lower order of humanity that it succeeded as well as it did.

If the early colonist and his successor, the American Pioneer, could be compared, whatever the point of view (industry, morals, character, ability, courage, devotion to ideals) the latter would not suffer. It was his fortune, however, to come upon the scene just when the political forces, the culminating and fanciful assertions of liberty, were uppermost in the world; and it was, perhaps, inevitable that this powerful magnet should attract the minds of finest quality and that religion should take second place. It was hard at best to keep these minds out of the attractive shallows of eighteenth century deism and speculation and to make them vital forces in the propagation of the highest faith.

The leadership of their time was not competent for this task, just as it is sometimes a question whether there are enough strong, earnest, able, educated men in the church of the present day to keep the best men and women from descent into the Avernus of an agnosticism as unreasoning as bigotry itself, or into a skepticism or indifference as cold as the grave. So long as religion or any other element vital to the life of men makes its appeal only through the average man, and not through the best, so long will it be a cause of weakness and encouragement to sect and faction. This was the order of appeal that the forms of religion made to the Pioneer, and the effect is apparent in the position held by the purest and most exalted faith ever bequeathed to mankind.



## The Awful Penalties of Bigotry

### *THE AWFUL PENALTIES OF BIGOTRY*

NOR with all the weakness incident to the hard theology through which these people passed, with the deprivations they suffered by the absence of a varied polite literature, can it be forgotten that whatever the Bible may have meant as a basis for credal or doctrinal arguments or quarrels, or as a consolation to those who relied literally upon its texts and their inferences, however sadly they may have failed to see or to understand its poetry or romance, it was the highest triumph of the English race.

It is possible, in the light of new knowledge, to reject its account of the origin of all things; but it will forever remain true that it so preserved the English language at its best as to spread it all round the earth and enable its users, the increasing millions of white mankind, to fix on a firm foundation the great literature that has been built as a superstructure. Everywhere it gave language a unity, a strength, and a force that made it the unconscious medium of an enduring conquest the like of which has never been known. Its one book of religion may lose its authority as a handbook for immortality, but the record of its conquests will remain imperishable as long as the language shall endure.

It would be easy to misinterpret the plain story thus told of the harsh conditions that survived out of due time and into an extent of territory greater than any single European country. Behind its roughness of exterior, its coarseness, often bordering upon the gross, its remnants of dead or dying superstitions, its exhibitions of hysteria

## Pioneer Foundations

so potent as almost to dispel hope itself, it would be easy to hide the beauties of a religion, the practice of which carried with it so many hardships, yet brought so much of happiness and comfort into lives otherwise robbed of joy.

It would be easy to obscure or overlook its sincerity in belief; the depth of the pure unquestioning faith inspired by it; its profound and wholesome influence upon life and conduct; its recognition of the obligations to family, neighbor, and society; its abnegation of selfish passions and appetites; its devotion not only to individual salvation but to that of all men; its power to ease or conquer domestic differences; its profound influence upon the happiness of those who lived together in family or social life often with sore temptation to disagreement or quarrel; and the growth of a patriotism that, so far as outside sanction was needed, was based wholly upon this very religion, thus aiding men and women to overcome an almost infinite number of temptations, otherwise beyond the power of human resistance.

When these things come home to us who live in what we think a new heaven and a new earth so far as religion goes, we are prone to forget how these people revelled in the horrors of damnation and thus made it necessary, if the truth was to be told, to emphasize some of the most disagreeable events known to the history of bigotry and ignorance.

*EDUCATION*



## WHAT THE BEGINNINGS WERE

NOTHING that can fall to my lot in this study interests me more as a writer, a student, or a humble participator in the life treated, than an effort to describe and estimate the spirit which moved these people in the midst of so many drawbacks to promote the thing called education. I shall not limit this description to the machinery, inherited or created through schools and other accepted mediums, for training the human mind to assimilate the facts of nature and of life and to put them to practical use.

I shall endeavor to deal with what these people read, either in books or newspapers; with how they obtained from the outside or supplied for themselves the materials they employed; with the narrow facilities they had; with how they gradually escaped from the theological formulas created by environment and circumstances; and with the place that nature had in this process of mental training.

When the surroundings in which they lived are considered, the verdict of shallow moderns would be that a chapter on this subject might be made as short and as negative in form as that which dealt with snakes in Ireland; but that would be only an emphasis of the tendency to forget beginnings or to overlook their importance. This is due to the fact that these moderns who, separated as by a gulf from the formative days, look back and find few of the physical aids or facilities now thought necessary :

## Pioneer Foundations

the elaborate schoolhouses; the trained or the mechanical teachers; the burdensome regulations; the compulsory attendance; the multiplicity of subjects taught; and the pursuit of a fad perhaps rather than a subject. They seem to see only the long distances from schools, the short terms, the ill-paid, untrained teachers drawn from many sources, the rude schoolbooks few in number, and the practical absence of supervision. They thus jump at once to the conclusion that such a people did not know even the alphabet of popular education.

But the more patient inquirer, anxious to know, will picture this minor area as almost imperial in size, with only about forty thousand people at the beginning of our period; and as he proceeds with the consideration it demands he will note that with almost no change in the character of its settlers other than that marked by improvement, they were multiplied by five in the first ten years, again by nearly four during the next ten, while in the forty-year period which ended with 1870 the number was increased well nigh thirty-fold. During all this time it was wholly Pioneer, as distinctly agricultural in the end as in the beginning; and yet our student, although still skimming lightly over the surface, would learn that the 775 schools with 878 teachers and 30,767 pupils of 1850, or fifteen and a half out of each hundred of population, had by 1860 become 3916 schools with 4810 teachers and 171,770 pupils, or more than twenty-four in each hundred; to be still further augmented in 1870 to 7495 schools, 9319 teachers, and 454,539 pupils, being an enrollment of no less than thirty-

## The Sites and Buildings

eight per cent of all the people, with steady improvement in results though with few marked changes in methods.

### THE SITES AND BUILDINGS

THIS inquirer, however critical he might be, having gone thus far would, no doubt, concede that these results achieved by such a population in its own way under its own auspices and paid for out of its own meagre resources did not come by accident. These people, gathered spontaneously from many sources, did not adopt any single existing system of teaching; in fact they did not profess to have any system; they merely went on, opened schools wherever there was a cluster of children, sometimes in dwellings; found or imported some kind of a teacher; used for a time and in all their variety the carefully treasured schoolbooks to which each family had been accustomed in the place of origin; waited with a persistence, in perfect keeping with their character, and like the conjuror's presto! change! they had their own system — one that fitted them almost before they had had time to think of it.

One of the claims often made is that the first thing the Pioneer thought of was the building of a church. This is true only in the sense that this church was a schoolhouse, because whenever three or four families found themselves together their earliest contribution to public spirit was to put up a building so named and primarily intended for holding a school. This was deemed their first need. The religious services, incident to such a small nucleus of a community, could be held in any log cabin, however small,

## Pioneer Foundations

or in any grove, however large. Even with such a collection of families it was certain that more than one denomination would be represented; so that, while the church, if available, would have been individual, the schoolhouse was not only common and necessary for all; but it was the universal forum for other public purposes : religious, political, and social.

Such a building was never intended solely for the use of these first straggling settlers : it was the outward sign of an inward enterprise that was intended to attract later comers. Every schoolhouse was an active competitor with every other. Many a mover, creeping in a covered wagon slowly up some river towards an unknown destination, would halt where he found what seemed to him the best school. If he could see it in operation in a well-warmed schoolhouse, however simple in accordance with the rude requirements of the times its furniture might be, with an active, outseeing young man as a teacher, he would often conclude to become part of such a promising neighborhood. The schoolhouse was thus primarily for use; secondarily, it was an advertisement.

### RELATION TO RELIGION AND POLITICS

OUTSIDE the economic motive that ever drove him on, the Pioneer had two ideals or passions : he believed almost to idolatry in the institutions of his country; and he was determined that if possible his children should have opportunities superior to his own. His idea of education may have been primitive (even from the mechanical or bureau-



## Relation to Religion and Politics

cratic point of view, short-sighted) but he recognized, as if by intuition, that the structure of society rested upon the solid foundations laid in the cement of knowledge; in some way, to him occult, this must be built upon the immovable rock of learning, upon something that reflected great minds, whose achievements and thoughts were the rightful heritage of the race. He felt, somehow, that these men had provided the tools necessary for use in every human emergency. Thus it was that the true Pioneer farmer boy lived in an atmosphere of which the component elements were hope, ambition, curiosity, determination to know and to do, all combining to create an outlook or prospect seldom seen among hard-working men, outwardly humble, but filled inwardly with a determination to do the best they could for themselves, society, and God — the last coming first.

While this desire for education was so general as to be practically universal, it did not comprehend much beyond the three R's. The attachment to classical learning had been weakened by the long trek through the wilderness. No longer deemed a necessity, little provision was made for it. It must never be forgotten that this was after what Thomas Wentworth Higginson happily called the "Reign of Andrew Jackson" when the practical or self-made man came suddenly, almost prematurely, to his own. Practically every figure standing out in the view of the Pioneer (Jackson, Clay, Webster, Benton, Cass, Van Buren, Horace Greeley, Governors, Senators, or other public men) belonged to this type. The commanding historic characters

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who attracted this man of shifting scenes (Washington, Jefferson, William Henry Harrison, Patrick Henry) were either self-made men or the education they had gained, through whatever medium, was for use.

As a result there was not much place for the county academy as it had developed on its best lines in New York. The clergy of New England, who for many generations had made the boys of their congregations into scholars, were not found because they did not exist; perhaps, they did not exist because the demand had been lost. There was no need for the classics in the popular sects which have been fully described, because their preachers had no use for what they mistakenly considered educational rubbish; for them, the interests of this world and the next were comprised in a set of infallible dogmas gathered from a book which, printed in English, was both foundation and superstructure, text and comment, and so required no other interpretation than itself.

The historic denominations drew their clergy from the older parts of the country, and when they came there was not much call for their acquisitions even if they had been far more complete than they were in reality. These men preached almost wholly to the converted and though they worked under different methods, still they were severely orthodox and did not feel called upon to challenge or supplement the ruder learning by which they were surrounded. Now and again, one more venturesome than his fellows, especially if he were the inheritor of Presbyterian traditions of culture, would endeavor to conduct a private

## How the Work Was Carried On

school or academy in his neighborhood; but while some of these came into temporary or local usefulness, the soil was generally unfriendly to such an educational enterprise.

So, in writing of education as it developed in Iowa or in any of the Pioneer States before 1870, we are limited almost wholly to the study of the common school.

### HOW THE WORK WAS CARRIED ON

It was to this broad field that effort was directed. There was a belief so widespread as to be almost universal that, narrow as were the powers of the State, instruction so differed from all things else that every child in the community was entitled to a chance at the public cost to obtain the essentials of the thing called education. The ability and willingness to take advantage of this gift, or to go further if desired, lay with the individual: the obligation of the community was discharged and its respectability asserted when it had furnished these initial opportunities. The provision of facilities was of necessity in the hands of the plain men, farmers, upon whose shoulders all burdens fell and to whom all initiative was committed. They worked throughout new areas, as these came under conquest from nature, with the power inherent in their own characters, aided by the momentum generated by their predecessors on other scenes.

They wanted expert advice and help and availed themselves of it when possible. In proof of this, in Iowa they early created a commission to consider and devise a system of public instruction for the new State, and at its head

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they placed Horace Mann (then nearing the summit of his useful career) perhaps the most comprehensive and original mind which in all our history has been devoted almost wholly to the development of popular methods of teaching. The chairman of the body, so far as records show, did not go into the State; but he and his associates made a comprehensive study of the then existing models of schools in other pioneer communities and submitted a report that has influenced school development ever since. It certainly was neither a small nor a vain thing when the responsible authority of this new State, poor in money, had the foresight and independence to take a step almost fifty years in advance of its time. That it had the courage to eliminate politics of every kind showed that it was no small or narrow idea that dominated its leaders. They took a step that has had beneficent effects, and if in a new community great men outstanding in achievement and opportunity are few in number, credit for insight must be given to them in their collective capacity.

The same process was carried further when they gave into the hands of another man, of outstanding independence and fitness, the execution of the plans they had made with so much care and judgment. This man was Thomas H. Benton, Jr., a nephew of the great Senator from Missouri. For nearly a quarter of a century, through periods when the State was dominated, now by one party then by another, without surrendering his independence or forgetting for a moment the object he had in mind, with undeviating devotion and unselfishness he forged ahead. He was per-

## How the Work Was Carried On

sistent in executing the laws under which he worked; but still more earnest in making the changes necessary to perfect the system.

He saw what the State in its rapid growth or as the result of initial timidity or oversight had lost or was likely to lose and in the constitutional convention of 1856 he carried through amendments or original articles that enlarged or perfected the educational system. The contest for its adoption was centered upon this provision, and the curious sight was seen of thousands of poor whites, many of them wholly illiterate, voting against the enlargement of opportunity for their children, while the majority of propertied and responsible citizens rallied with success to its support.

If in its wisdom the legislature of Iowa of these modern days should ever be in a mood to disprove the charge of ingratitude on the part of republics, it could not better do so than by raising a practical memorial to the man who carried out the laws as he found them, and revised or supplemented them when necessary, and thus did the original work of education on lines that have been as useful to the State and to the entire country as they were honorable to himself. If this work of commemorating the man, who on the whole has been the most efficient and far-seeing citizen in its history, should ever be undertaken, every school child ought to be made familiar with his character and services and invited to contribute to an object so worthy. In doing this, credit should also be given to the public men who in a day supposed to be given over

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to partisanship, theological bigotry, and short views, were able to take the large outlook only possible to real statesmen.

### THE MANAGEMENT STRICTLY LOCAL

IN such a spirit and under such auspices the people in each community, vying with every other in enthusiasm and liberality, entered upon their task. Working for many years mainly under what was known as the district-township system, which made every township responsible for the education of all the children within it instead of throwing upon its newer parts burdens for which they were not prepared, they showed their attachment to a cause. This was the extension to local affairs of that spirit of helpfulness so characteristic of individuals. It did not enter into the making of roads, or into other public activities; but its effect was to build and equip new schoolhouses and supply teachers in outlying parts of a township — remote from the almost universal village near the center — with little regard to the number of pupils. This centralized management brought into play not only the resources but the experience of the earlier settlers, and promoted among the whole an emulation than which nothing could have been more wholesome or productive of larger results.

In the absence of centers where graded schools might under ideal conditions have been possible, the desire was to bring the school to the pupil rather than to force him in a severe climate to travel an extreme distance over bad roads in order to find the facilities to which, under the

## The Management Strictly Local

sense of social duty incident to the time, he was entitled as a right. This development was fairly uniform in such neighborhoods, and it extended to every part of each county — the sixteen townships comprising it, and into all others as they were settled. This even distribution of schools came from the same inspiration and was achieved by the same methods and the same order of men. No county dared lag behind because its people knew that in such a case the newcomers for whom they were all bidding would pass them by. Everywhere a similar number of pupils would be cared for in schoolhouses of the same general pattern, with furniture of the same rude order, with teachers differing little from each other in training or fitness, receiving the usual meagre salaries, and conforming to the State law fixing six months as the minimum annual term.

In like manner the management did not differ in any substantial respect. Everywhere the men of substance and success, those with the best youthful opportunities for training, were chosen as directors, whether they worked in boards, under the district-township system, or singly, as in the independent districts which soon became almost general. Ignorant men, wholly unfit for the work entrusted to them, found their way now and then into these places, sometimes as a result of a desire to have a teacher belonging to a favored religious sect. But this was rare, and reaction came so promptly that the experiment once tried was seldom repeated.

By custom as well as by law the duties assigned to the director made it next to impossible for a scheming or ignor-

## Pioneer Foundations

ant type of man to hold the office. He was expected, in general, to visit the school every week or fortnight not in order to interfere with instruction or even to judge it, but to give the teacher the moral support thought necessary to enforce discipline. There were always a number of bad boys, and sometimes a wilful girl, who had to be severely dealt with. The spirit of independence which leads every American to think that he must not bow his head to authority outside his home was strong. It had been inclined in earlier history to take the form of rowdyism, and as such children always drifted together the teacher had no other recourse but severity. It was rare that the parent did not give the teacher — especially if the latter showed himself firm as well as competent — ample power to deal with his children who, in that day of the rod, were likely to subject themselves to corporal punishment at home as well as at school — the former far more to be dreaded than the latter. Sometimes the director would be faced with rebellion in the school by his own child. The sense of public duty was so general that the teacher would often send for such a director-parent who, before all the pupils, would take into his hands the chastisement of his own rebel.

The director was more than the man who hired the teacher and saw that the school was put under way. In the early days before there was sufficient money to provide fuel it was the rule for each patron of the school to furnish a certain quantity of wood of good quality for each of his pupils attending. This was a very flexible custom, often more honored in the breach than in the observance. Many



## Taking Care of the Teacher

of the parents were poor or "ornery" (often both) without resources or pride, so that it seldom happened that they made even the small contribution involved in going upon invitation into some timber owner's holdings in order to cut the cordwood and haul it in with borrowed horses or oxen. The attempt to get this contribution was a serious affair for the director. It was generally calculated at the beginning of a winter term that a certain proportion of the patrons would fail, and so an understanding would be entered into by a few citizens (again somewhat resembling a gentleman's agreement in modern business) to see that the school should never be closed for lack of fuel.

### *TAKING CARE OF THE TEACHER*

WHILE the practice never universal in later days of boarding around continued it was the director's business to arrange the schedule. There were always a number of delinquents and others without accommodations, so that the same few had to take up the task of entertainment. Hence, it often happened that the teacher would live with a few families — those of enterprise and pride in the work who were most congenial to him. It would happen occasionally that some of the patrons would dislike the teacher or quarrel with him and thus throw all plans out of gear. In other families the teacher was appreciated as an aid to ambitious children and for his company.

The director assigned the schoolhouse for religious services to different denominations in their turn, or permitted lectures, spelling matches, or debates; it was his business

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to care for the grounds, to drain or to plant them with trees; to maintain the fences, and to see that convenient open spaces were made available for playgrounds; in short, he was a sort of neighborhood superintendent or Pooh Bah. All this unpaid work, with no provision for petty expenses, made it essential that he should not only command the confidence and help of his neighbors but be wholly impartial. A selfish school director was seldom seen because such a man living in the midst of from twenty to thirty families on close neighborly terms with most and as a sort of lord of the manor to the humbler sort, could not look out for himself or play favorites. He had his own troubles, even at best, and because of the difficulty of his task the finding of a successor was not easy. Many such men — as already explained, were chosen from those who were the busiest and most successful farmers — held their places and did this laborious and harassing work for their districts for periods running from five to twenty years.

The preacher living in the neighborhood was seldom elected school director, because there was a prejudice against him in even the smallest public office; and the country doctor seldom had time for such a work. The neighborhood note-shaver was neither competent nor acceptable and if there happened to be a skinflint he was not wanted because these people, hard as their lines were, so far as ready money was concerned did not look to save on their school expenses. The storekeeper, the blacksmith, the miller, or other mechanic was already a sort of public servant and could seldom accept new duties.

## Taking Care of the Teacher

The result of these exclusions (added to the illiterates, the obviously incompetent, and the poor whites) reduced the range of choice for the most important office in the community. Often there was a sort of understanding among the leading farmers that one should succeed another when the task was found to be too onerous, so that both fortunately and by necessity there was continuity of policy in the majority of these budding public centers. Generally speaking, too, the men who did this work were not seekers after county or legislative offices. They were the recognized men of character, whose sole object, outside personal affairs in which they were diligent, was the good of the public. Their enterprising spirit thus found an outlet in the school and the church. The more active they were in the one the more deeply they were involved in the other.

The school furnished the only survival of the Pioneer scenes of the New England March meeting. Its affairs were discussed, its director or board was expected to report, opinions were expressed about teachers or equipment, new facilities were authorized, additional taxes voted, and a fairly intelligent interest manifested by those who had to pay the bills. The receptive spirit of these meetings, the general agreement that improvements, then fully explained, must be kept up to the highest standard, was often surprising. A delinquent or incompetent board or director was likely to get short shrift, so that all the proceedings though conducted by plain men sparing an hour or so from their hard, driving work showed an interest and intelligence that were highly creditable.

## Pioneer Foundations

### *THE BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT*

As a rule the earliest schoolhouses were built by the voluntary efforts of the first settlers. They were seldom public although in many cases when, after the new neighborhood had somewhat shaken itself down, the sites turned out to be central, they were transferred or taken over by the township for its use. Most of these earliest structures were small log cabins, perhaps 15 x 18 feet and furnished in the rudest fashion. The first schools were generally known as select, that is, they were pay schools where some former teacher who had had experience and had become a settler gave fugitive instruction to the few children from whose parents a small fee could be collected. The pupils were few in number, but in these backwoods structures many a boy and girl destined for scholastic honors made a start in letters. The spirit of parents that led them to institute such a service at all would be supplemented by the earnestness and ambition of pupils. A people capable of such thought and enterprise almost before they had started in the world were not likely to hesitate in the initial stages of an educational system, the end of which they saw in their visions.

The teachers did not differ much from their fellows except that they had had in some previous state of existence perhaps as little more than boys a rude experience in giving instruction. They did not, perhaps, know more than the average of their neighbors nor anything like so much as the best among them; but they did at least know more than the children who were to be under them.

## The Buildings and Equipment

But this was only a temporary stage when no more than ten or fifteen families had scattered themselves over farms rather widely separated. In winter the younger children would generally be taken to school in sleds — families providing this transportation in turn. It was seldom long before the new neighborhood grew into from twenty to fifty families; by which time a professional townsite maker had descended upon it, laid it out into lots, and with the characteristic land fever of the American a certain proportion of the new comers had started a village, generally thought, in the eyes of its owners and residents, to be destined in the near future to become at least the metropolis of a county, if not of a State. The liberal proprietor with a knowledge which was not hid under a bushel donated an acre for a schoolhouse.

The first building erected from the united tax levy was almost uniformly of frame, somewhat larger than its predecessor, about 18 x 24 feet in size, and by midwinter when crowded would hold as many as forty or fifty pupils of all ages from five to twenty-one as provided by law. These buildings were furnished with two rows of high desks, like those used by the bookkeeper of the period, running their whole length. The seats for them were high benches without backs, so that the pupil with legs too short to reach the floor sitting on one of these suggestions of the old-time stocks was subject to a torture almost beyond endurance. At the top was the teacher's desk and platform, and in between these high desks were placed both longitudinally and transversely hard benches, still without backs, but

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happily so low that their occupants might rest their feet upon the floor. In the center, with these furnishings ranged about it, was the great iron box-stove of the period, ingeniously designed to roast those nearest to it or to freeze those placed at some distance.

There were heard daily in this little room an average of ten to twelve classes, one reciting constantly in front of the teacher's throne — a rude desk at the end — with all kinds of punishments from the disgrace brought to the wearer of the dunce-cap in the corner with face to the wall, looking about furtively to feed his sense of humor or to amuse his mates, ranging up to the twenty or more strokes which, in the schoolmaster's view, were the scant due of the head mischief-maker.

In this bedlam every child, from the bashful, shrinking five-year-old girl to the most studious among the older boys, was expected to sit with the solemn face supposed to indicate attention to lessons. Each was expected to have a realizing sense of the importance of the pending task, and a sense of gratitude to the State which had instituted and to the parents who had freely made these provisions for learning. In such surroundings the lure of the Presidency was constantly held out to the boys and the mistress-ship of the White House to the girls. These promises were illustrated by as many examples as the teacher could think of and were enforced by the admonitions of parents — sometimes emphasized by the swish of the rod as a further incentive to effort and an encourager of gratitude.

But in spite of hardships and drawbacks — and the de-

## The Buildings and Equipment

sire for learning has nowhere encountered any that were more severe and discouraging — the thing known as education went forward by leaps and bounds. Parents were realizing their desire to give their children better chances than they themselves had enjoyed. In many respects, in spite of this seemingly disparaging account of a process which does not easily lend itself to description, there was always a remnant, a residue of these children of nature who went out into the world with an equipment which, if talent and health permitted, would be increased by effort in later life. In other words, their native qualities had been so drawn out that they laid a crude but solid foundation.

That modern pedant, who by the mystery of language has been turned into a settled pedagogist, will ask perhaps with a sneer what under such discouraging circumstances a child could learn in such a Babel, or with such teachers in surroundings so apparently sordid. He will risk everything that his theories inculcate or that he holds dear. He will find no system, and in this conclusion he is correct. He will not hear of comfortable individual desks and seats, nicely adjusted to childish anatomy, or of a machine which sometimes tends to hide the human being in the cogs of its wheels. He will miss the kindergarten from a generation that did not yet know Froebel; and even the Lancaster methods which, having flourished in England early in the century, had died and been buried and were so wholly forgotten that they had never been heard of on the frontier. It was before the days of normal schools; teachers' institutes still lay in the future; and Madam Montessori had not

## Pioneer Foundations

been born. There was no rallying cry about "the little red schoolhouse on the hill and no saloon in the valley", no formal raising of the flag garnished with the oratory of flubdub and no salute to it each morning; but there did come out, even from these humble places, boys and girls with an instinctive interest in our ideas and institutions and a desire to gain a fair knowledge of the great events in our history. There was even shown when revolt came a patriotism which, not content with songs, or declamations, or salaams, threw itself intuitively as well as thoughtfully into a great civil conflict.

### HOW READING WAS TAUGHT

Now what, in spite of small buildings with almost no equipment, with farmer management and small expenditure and with a shifting tenure of teachers did the children of this time really learn? In the first place they were grounded in all-round manhood and womanhood and trained in independence: the complement of manhood and womanhood. Their schooling at home in industry ran parallel with their efforts to acquire letters—both involving difficulty and sacrifice. Thus, they added to their stock of character and were equipped with a common sense that is always rarer than book learning. In the latter, they specialized in the three R's. Perhaps it may be well to define what these meant because a knowledge of them is about everything that even the most complete education brings to any man. It is merely a difference in degree or the power to utilize.



## How Reading Was Taught

First as to reading. In these schools the child with a capacity for taking on any polish whatever was grounded in spelling, that was thought to be the under-stone in the knowledge of the English language. Whether or not the method was the best, the most difficult of all acquirements was to be so drilled and driven into the competent pupil that the words necessary for the expression of ideas were at the end of his tongue or the point of his pen, and when an enlarged vocabulary became necessary it followed as a matter of intuition or further study. There was nothing fancy about it, and yet in all the ingenious catches involved in the old-time spelling school there were few successful traps. Such a training was the discourager of carelessness; to be letter perfect according to the standards of the time was the ideal.

This was merely a door opener to reading which, less exact in achievement and with greater flexibility, was on plain lines; the desire and the power so to render a given selection that in pronunciation, inflection, and general effect, its meaning should be clear was the object of patient study and constant practice. There was no general access to a mass of books; but the ascending series of readers contained a few specimens of the best English poetry and prose as high in quality as the language afforded. These must not only be read or recited from memory; but they were taken to pieces in grammar or rhetoric until the place and the meaning of each word was as well understood as was possible to the youthful mind.

Aside from these there was only one book, but that was

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read, studied, and so far as it was possible with the double brakes of theology working at every turn was fairly understood. This book was, indeed, much resorted to in private; but, for the most part it was read aloud at morning prayer or before bedtime or on Sundays, and in the evenings to fathers and mothers who had no other literary outlet or standard. The child was required to learn how to bring out the meaning, the hidden beauties, the imprecations, the consolations, the every echo of what was believed to be the actual voice of God. It was not a show performance made to exhibit with pride the accomplishment of some youthful genius ambitious for Roscian honors : it was for use, not too good for human nature's daily food. It must stand the test of rivalry in the weekly or monthly school exhibition which, being always republican not democratic in character, was selective, where success brought recognition and failure insured humiliation.

Reading could not, therefore, be a wholly haphazard achievement, or something hid away for use in some secret chamber, or only employed with swaying trees or waving cornstalks for auditors. It was not theatrical or declamatory, but was used to reveal to simple and interested minds real meanings. Some exhibition of a teacher's proficiency in this great art had often to be made before he was employed, and many an aspiring young man was rejected by a school board composed of plain farmers because of some failure to satisfy them in a special or an improvised reading examination. Not all were equal (this would be beyond humanity's standards) but there must be a substantial

## The Teaching of Writing

uniformity in knowledge of this most important of the arts.

Without derogating from modern methods and results, it is probably safe to say that there was far more good spelling and reading in the schools of the Pioneer region in 1860 than can be shown there now. The effects were later apparent in the careful speech of the young men and women so educated; in their general freedom from coarse slang; and their ability to express clearly what they desired to say. The writing in the newspapers of that day was superior to the average of that now printed — thus justifying the claims made for the rural education that is sometimes so patronized.

### THE TEACHING OF WRITING

WRITING, the second note in the crescendo of the R's, was taught under the conditions already noted as to desks and other facilities. The spectacle of a child between seven and twelve years old seated at one of the high desks in question, its feet off the floor without intermediate rests, painfully scribbling away at the copy printed separately at the top of its copy-book page, or sometimes set by the teacher, or laboriously trying to negotiate the lines and angles in "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (the stock caligraphic sentiment of the time) only inspires the question how they ever achieved even the smallest success. It was no wonder that the favorite assurance, often given by the teacher to the somewhat impatient parent, was that the child bright in other studies never would learn to write. There was no blackboard upon which might be written

## Pioneer Foundations

these cabalistic signs with ample time and opportunity to explain something of their formation and mystery. Perhaps the real secret was that these children learned at home where the facilities provided, though primitive, would be somewhat less inhuman or torturing.

Happily, the gray-goose quill invoked by the poet had by this time gone out of common use and had become — as it has since remained — a fad, so that the teacher escaped the pen-making-or-sharpening labors of his predecessor; but it had been succeeded by a steel pen always the same for every hand (Joseph Gillott's 303) sharp as a needle, stiff, inflexible, fixed in a rude, coarse holder — apparently made to torture the child — something that no grown-up would now be tempted to use. The paper of the time was much better than might be supposed — always ruled, rather thinner than the average in use now, but dear in price and therefore precious in the eyes of teacher and parent. The ink was mainly home-made in each family. Its foundation was a decoction produced by boiling the inner bark of a white oak or the soft maple and then thickening and coloring it with copperas or other common chemical. The result, considering the number of its brewers and the variety of formulas, was somewhat accidental, especially as to color. Towards 1860 an English ink — Arnold's Writing Fluid, imported in small earthen bottles or jugs — was used. The only way the prudent child could expect to have ink available on any given winter day was to carry it home with him, put it before the fire, and return it for use next day.

## The Teaching of Writing

During the later sixties a marked change came over the teaching of writing. A system, known from its deviser as the Spencerian, substituted the free hand for the finger movement which had previously prevailed. It was full of flourishes and show — familiarly known as tails — was larger than the old and harder to learn, requiring more space for the arms or elbows. Its tendency was to reduce handwriting to a monotony that eliminated character. The old-fashioned slate was in universal use, not only for arithmetical calculations but for writing and for rude drawing that might be done (this mainly taking the form of caricatures of an unpopular teacher — in this respect all teachers are alike to all school children in all ages) and passed from hand to hand at great bodily peril. A really fine slate, being scarce and expensive, was a treasure; but some parents were as particular in finding such articles as they were in providing good food. An unusually rare one was of such quality, double, that is, two fitted with hinges and held by a clasp. These had always to be carried home for the evening studies — incident to the working of sums — as all problems were called.

Slate pencils were another article difficult of acquisition, and when good ones were found they were jealously guarded from loss, loan, or theft. They largely took the place of lead pencils — which were bad in quality and expensive — because they saved costly paper. On the whole the handwriting of the time was of a better order than might have been expected from the character of the materials, the practice, and the facilities provided for its acquisition.

## Pioneer Foundations

### STRESS LAID ON ARITHMETIC

If reading and writing were the foundations of the educational structure, arithmetic, completing the trinity of R's, was its coping stone. It is difficult in these days of over dabbling in many things to understand how much emphasis was put upon it. Beginning as soon as the alphabet was learned with a little primer and ascending until, within the later days of our period, the student was carried into and through the Higher Arithmetic, though seldom past it. There was more variation in the capacity of teachers in this study than in the others. Some even exaggerated it and they would push their pupils forward with as much rapidity as was consistent with proficiency. It was mainly the older boys who were able to get out of the last of the four fundamentals—long division being the real *pons asinorum* for the majority—when working power came.

As their average annual attendance seldom exceeded ten or twelve weeks and they had to spend at least two or three of these in review or in regaining the position attained in the previous year, much time was given to repetition. It was only one or two boys, obviously superior to the rest, pushing on into a separate class of their own and after years devoted to the subject who would finally finish the third book or part. This was a real achievement but was seldom reached until the age of eighteen or nineteen when the feat was generally looked upon as the end of formal education.

But such boys (I do not recall, as within experience or observation, that any girl ever went this far in a country

## Stress Laid on Arithmetic

school) had really worked, in every sense of the word, to win this guerdon. Those who accomplished this feat, with its accompaniments of reading, writing, grammar, and geography, had an ability and persistence that, if they could have attended a preparatory school as other and more favored boys were then doing, would have been borne to the door of the average college or university of the day. In order to reach even this goal they had to jump over a half-dozen classes of average children who had fallen by the educational wayside.

This was the school training of the self-made man of that and previous days in our history. Whether they went out into the world and repeated the process, called making a name for themselves, or settled down as farmers, they were all equally self-made. They were not the victims of poverty because they did not know its meaning, but they were sacrifices to that awful Moloch : the law of averages. On the one hand, their parents did not realize that these boys were exceptions to the general low standards about them and so they turned them into food for the industrial monster of the day; on the other, the popular educational machine put such boys on its Procrustean bed and lopped them to the length desired. If equality, or this same law of averages, ever demonstrated its fatuity, it was in these school systems which, after the breakdown of academies, accompanied the Pioneer on his western march. The only surprise is that out of it all there should have survived even a suggestion of initiative and leadership.





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*EDUCATION*



## NO SECTARIAN INSTRUCTION

DESPITE the universal prevalence and discussion of religion, its contentious questions were not permitted to enter the schools. Even a director, however narrow a sectarian he might be, would seldom go out of his way to employ a teacher of his own persuasion. Generally speaking, no questions were asked. It was assumed that an applicant for a school would not be what was known as an infidel : beyond this, there was no interest in his religious alignment. I do not recall more than one instance where the teacher took an active part in a revival or other religious exercises. He was a local preacher who soon proved to be such a hypocrite that this peril was not again permitted to enter that particular schoolhouse. Indeed, the average teacher seemed rather inclined to avoid participation in such exercises and to congratulate himself that custom had almost excluded him from them.

The only recognition of religion in the schools was the reading of a chapter in the Bible at the beginning of each day. Generally each pupil above certain grades would read a verse; from the low average standard of proficiency in this art, the elocutionary results were sometimes horrid beyond thought. In many cases the teacher himself would prefer to read with clearness and natural expression the whole chapter, but there was no comment, no explanation beyond the definition of a word, nothing to give any twist

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to the text for or against any of the favorite interpretations of the day. Such an exhibition of elocution quite generally surpassed those of the average preacher who might happen to read that chapter as a lesson on the following Sunday. In any event, it was a real help to the hearers as well as to the community enjoying it. Such an exercise did something to maintain that high standard of English fixed forever in the King James version. It never palled on the taste either in form or belief, and its use was so universal that, even if it was not always rendered at its best, it was almost impossible to spoil it. It fixed a high standard for vocabulary and sonorousness. Many a pupil learned from it those rhetorical beauties which, in later and perhaps happier times, would adorn speech and writing of an excellent order and, as already explained, would confirm a good reader in his attainments and extend the range of his tastes.

### *CHANGES IN SCHOOLBOOKS*

ONE of the serious abuses developed in American education, even long before the period under study, was the change in schoolbooks. The system under which officials (sometimes State, sometimes county, often local) would substitute one series of books for another in their schools, with little improvement in merit and sometimes with deterioration, was the cause of one of the scandals of the time. In some States, notably Indiana in an early day, this abuse was corrected for a time and so far as possible by the State giving its name to the series that had best com-

## Changes in Schoolbooks

mended itself, providing for their sale at reasonable prices, and fixing a period during which there should be no change. But, in general, parents had no redress. If a change was ordered in one or two years after a selection had been reached, the new books must be procured. In that appraisal of bad business influences which some student will make one of these days, the corrupt and successful efforts of schoolbook publishers will probably be credited with the foul precedence it made for itself.

In connection with the question of books, it ought to be set down that a considerable proportion of the children, especially in a village, would come to school without any. They would be kept for a few days, and then sent home for sanitary reasons or to await the charity of cast-off books, even below their grades, or to recruit that army of illiterates to which their parents, like their class, belonged. These were the miserable poor whites to which reference has been made. They were the trial of officials, teachers, parents, and children. They were filthy, beyond the power of description, almost beyond imagination, covered with vermin, the victims of loathsome diseases, communicable by touch and almost by sight. Many of them were bastards, the boys preordained as petty thieves, steering their way slowly but often surely to the avenging rope of the mob, the girls marching as steadily to an equally predestined fate as wantons. They were the problem of every village neighborhood and nowhere was it more in evidence all along the line of the Western march than in that system of free schools of which they were fittingly the determined

## Pioneer Foundations

opponents. It must not be forgotten that slums are not limited to the East Ends of great cities nor imagined that all Jukes families have been interned in their habitat in Ulster County, New York.

The schoolbooks used were almost distinctly Western. Long after the best books then known had passed into complete use in the States of the East, they were still unknown in the great Pioneer region, so slow were these people in discovering and adopting the most efficient agencies available. Much of this was due to the influences which surrounded the publication and distribution of schoolbooks. There neither was nor could be free trade in these publications. They were bound down to the monopolistic conditions of their time, and in the absence of knowledge these could not be broken. Many years were to pass before the best and latest readers, spelling books, arithmetics, grammars, and geographies made their way into this new region, not because they did not exist but for the reason that the inferior products could not be displaced. This emphasizes the conclusion that the change of books was not always the worst evil: it was only the wrong changes that made improvement impossible.

### *THE CLASS OF TEACHERS*

It is time to inquire who taught in these schools. In the first place, they were quite uniformly men; in the second, they were not always very young. In those rough times when rowdiness had not gone out it was scarcely a job for boys just loosed from the common schools. They could

## The Class of Teachers

not be trusted to give instruction to the exceptional boy whom even the grinding nine or ten months of farm work could not keep down — not in the matter of animal spirits, but in ability and determination to learn as much as he could. Such a boy was the *bête noir* of the incompetent teacher, far more to be dreaded than the mechanical examinations made by the county superintendent for a certificate, or the more trying tests given by directors.

It would probably be safe to estimate the average age of country school teachers between 1850 and 1865 at about twenty-eight or thirty, and their experience at not less than from five to seven winter terms. In many cases they had taken up the work of teaching as a temporary calling which, in the days of low wages for farm labor, would enable them to supplement the latter as followed in the summer, so that they could thus earlier start farming for themselves. They belonged to this class though seldom to the most active and enterprising who never hesitated to start at once with such resources as their work and credit could command. Now and then, when college students were much older, one would still be slowly working his way through, often unable to graduate before thirty. In any case, whatever the origin or motive they took up this work in as much earnest as if the future had nothing else in store for them. In reality, the majority had no intention of continuing in it. So general was this practice that in later years a group of men, successful in politics, profession, business, farming, or manufacturing, would generally discover that most of them had at some time taught school.

## Pioneer Foundations

This tendency enabled these new communities, despite drawbacks, to command the services of a type of teacher probably much superior in family, outlook, ambition, and even in attainment to those who now fill the schoolhouses in rural districts. Generally speaking, teachers were going about looking for a place. They knew where the best schools were to be found, and the live director would cast his net far and wide for the man who had proved himself. As rotation was applied almost as rigidly to teachers as in the choice of elective officials or preachers, he seldom taught two successive winters in the same district. If such a teacher was successful, some other and more attractive school had discovered it and wanted him; if he was a failure he would have to move on into a place so remote that his demerits could not be disclosed in time to save the unfortunate district.

Sometimes when, owing to the abnormal increase of schools, there was a shortage of teachers directors would besiege the county superintendent's office like housewives in an employment agency. In such cases, the newer and younger men would get their chances. As a general rule, first-class certificates were issued only to teachers of experience, but when demand outran supply the brighter pupils who had pushed their way up through the higher arithmetic would be enticed into the service, many of them receiving and deserving the best certificates. When they brought interest and enthusiasm into their work, they often succeeded even better than the average older teachers. They knew both the want of confidence in them and their own



## The Class of Teachers

shortcomings. These, added to the pride of their class and time, made them work hard not only to keep well ahead of their advanced classes, but to apply themselves steadily to their temporary work so far as materials existed, but especially to the reading of the best literature attainable. Many a young man, whom opportunity slighted in his school days, found in a few months or a few terms devoted to a country school the impulse that either gave him new tastes for use in later life or opened, at least for a time, the doors of a nearby college.

The teacher had to make himself very human. Knowing his field and the people with whom he dealt, he must be "familiar but by no means vulgar"; have many friends but few intimates; avoid attention to the young women of his neighborhood; especially never look, even askance, before the end of his term, at a girl in his school, however attractive she might be, or however coquettishly she might invite attention; he must play with the elder boys, but never too well; compose the quarrels or differences of the younger, and that by respect and not by authority; have no favorites or pets, and recognize no differences in social standing during working hours; be indulgent with the dull or stupid; be considerate with the elder women, but not weak or silly; cultivate the better manners of which he was supposed to be an exemplar; help the neighbor men with advice in any problem over which they were puzzled, especially in arithmetic or accounts; and he was bound, by duty as well as by policy, to avoid taking any part or side in politics, in the sectarian differences, or even in the

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revival meetings or other exercises lying all about him. In short, he must enter into everything in the life of the community of which for a time he was an official, but he must not think himself in and of it.

If he had these gifts and qualities, and taught his pupils with fair acceptance and never let them get beyond him in a disciplinary way, he would command respect, could use to the limit his authority to administer corporal punishment, and would be asked to come again the next winter. Such a man made his way into the good will of his pupils and formed those life-long friendships than which few can be stronger or more satisfying. If he lacked these (the points inherent in a gentleman) and assumed an air of superiority, his teaching career in that neighborhood or those adjacent was likely to be brief, and his experience was pretty certain to be the same if he sought fresh woods and pastures new.

### *WHAT TEACHERS DID FOR THEMSELVES*

THE country school was seldom a training ground for a Dr. Arnold, an Eliphalet Nott, a Mark Hopkins, or a William Everett, but it did broaden the lives of promising young men and start both them and many pupils on the road to usefulness. Probably the majority of the best type, the young men who between 1850 and 1862 scattered themselves through the country schools of the whole Pioneer area, at least one-half of them attained some recognition either in their own communities or in the Civil War, and afterwards took good rank in a profession or business. With

## What Teachers Did for Themselves

all the drawbacks and weaknesses incident to the period, as well as in this special work, in a life of varied opportunities, I have never known a time nor seen a place where the schoolmaster could better be said to be abroad than that exemplified in the early history of this last of the Pioneer States. These wholesome results could not be shown in statistics (no census ever did or will tell the truth about the thing called illiteracy) but they were obvious in the general character of its people. Long before 1870 the foresight and enterprise of its early legislatures and the wisdom of Horace Mann and his associates as architects and of Thomas H. Benton, Jr., and his coworkers as builders had been vindicated.

There has been much lamentation that New England "school ma'ams" were never imported and acclimated in the Pioneer States. They were known and their virtues and their education had full recognition: but there was no place for them in the rough and tumble of that life. The woman teacher as a class and in the long run is always and everywhere, and for reasons natural, human, and proper, an understudy on the educational stage; but a contingent of attractive and educated young women scattered through a series of communities where the disparity against their sex was so decided might have lasted in an unmarried state for about the first half of their first term; beyond this commanding reason, the fact stands out that the training of the young in new and rude communities, difficult at its best estate, was a man's job.

It was not alone in discipline, but the drawbacks to liv-

## Pioneer Foundations

ing; the boarding round; the scattered families; the making of the fires and their maintenance; the preparation, each day by the teacher, with the help of the big boys, of the kindling and the firewood; the shovelling of snow from the paths and entrances; the going home with the younger children in storms — an almost unlimited number of acts requiring physical stamina tended to disqualify the woman for the work.

But a still stronger reason was found in a feeling of opposition (it may be called prejudice) nowhere stronger than among the Pioneer mothers themselves who had an ingrained feeling that their children were entitled to the guidance of men. This was confirmed by the strongest argument of all that the woman's place, every woman's place, was in her own or her father's home. The Pioneer life was filled with regard for the womanly, but there was no recognized standing for what is now called feminism.

### *PARENTAL INTEREST IN THE SCHOOL*

THESE people were plain, unaffected, doing nothing unusual except making a new State, all manual workers; and so far as money or accumulated property went they were poor; but this did not disqualify them from taking a real interest in their schools once they had them under way; so, when their children were in attendance, often when they had none, they maintained their interest. They did this primarily by visiting or welcoming the teacher in order to give him the best account they could of the pupils confided to him. This report was, naturally, as favorable as

## Parental Interest in the School

it could be made; the good no doubt predominating because in the process of weighing the bad nearly always kicks the beam; but, if a child was inclined to be idle, or mischievous, or untruthful, or even vicious, this fact was pretty certain to be borne in upon the teacher — and that, too, generally in the presence of the recreant — and full authority was given to use any means, which might be necessary — in those days, the eleventh commandment, though Hudibrastic and not scriptural in origin, was, “Spare the rod and spoil the child”, so that there was never any doubt, either at school or in the home, what “means” really meant. This consistent frankness had no element of cruelty or hardness; but it did carry with it recognition of the fact that authority was continuous and must be respected.

Then these parents — the responsible and intelligent among them — generally visited the school upon odd occasions without notice and listened to the recitations. Sometimes the older among the men would make little speeches, well-meant but funny when recalled two or three generations later. Now and then one bolder or more confident than the rest would ask questions about the pronunciation, perhaps new to him, of a word or the names of rivers upon which a capital or other city was situated, or even upon the method of proving a sum. In general, however, they were silent, encouraging both teacher and pupil and were proud to think that this institution was really theirs, that it was a part of the boasted palladium of liberty, and confident that the future of the Commonwealth largely depended upon it — as it really did.

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### LACK OF COLLEGE TRAINING

It is probably safe to estimate that in interior districts there was not an average of two farmers in each new county who had had a college education with its attendant degree. Such men seldom moved into new States and took up farming: the only trade there was. Even the lawyers, the physicians, and most of the ministers in the larger places were self-trained men like the rest. But wherever educated men were found, much was expected of them. They must be ready not only to speak or to advise on the larger things of life, but they must do the more work in order to illustrate the ancient motto *noblesse oblige*. Having received much, they must give in proportion. In many cases, the confession must be made, these men were disappointing. They had not been greatly advantaged by their extra or unusual opportunities, so that they often fell behind the best active, intelligent, public-spirited farmers. Indeed, there was a judgment, common though generally unjust, that often put such men down as "educated fools" — the hardest of all hard sayings.

This verdict had a serious effect upon the higher education so that many of the abler among the Pioneers did not appreciate its benefits. By the time that in the scheme of things Iowa was reached there had grown up a sort of instinctive opposition to the classics, until they were so badly taught that they had no doubt justly earned their disfavor. It was, however, this comparative failure of the college man to do his full part that accounted mainly for this feeling. The low state of the clergy who, outside a

## Lack of College Training

few in the towns, knew little more of the classics than a country schoolboy of the day also promoted this tendency, which had a bad effect then and was to have a still more serious one as the State grew older and began to branch out into other and larger lines as its predecessors had done before it.

As population grew a small proportion of the best farmers had in their native environment attended some small college or perhaps an incipient State university for a few terms — long enough to give them an inkling of what lay concealed, but not a sufficient time to carry them through, or to tempt them into the professions. Such men had added to their common sense — this was considered in a Pioneer country a high evidence of genius — something that could not have been defined. They went out into the hurly-burly of life without illusions, with some of the virtues of the higher education, without its vices or failure to adjust itself to new conditions, and they pulled in the boat of practical life every ounce of which they were capable. There was neither flinching nor lack of power. It was they and their less fortunate associates who made the school laws a success and supported every movement that even suggested improvement. They were among the creators of these new States.

Whether they devoted themselves to industry, as, in some form, they all did, or to religion, or education, or any work requiring public spirit, they builded all the time and always better than they knew. The men of education who in an elder day as lawyers, doctors, or clergymen had taken the

## Pioneer Foundations

lead in teaching the brighter boys of a neighborhood, in private schools and in the organization of new facilities, had disappeared from their places and left no successors. So the plain people in question took up the dropped tasks, and under many discouragements had to do the best they could. This accounts for practically all there was in the conduct of education whether in the log schoolhouse, or in the final course of the higher education.

The development of the latter hardly falls within the period under treatment and will claim some added study in the necessary process of summing up. It was only in 1868 that the State University began to get fairly well under way, and not before it had become enmeshed in all the complex webs that party politics could spin and then weave into a stronger net. Before 1870 the small church colleges did not rise above the rank of a fair order of academies as the latter institutions were then known in the older parts of the country. They were not only feeble in endowment but so intensely theological that they were constantly weakened. It must, however, be said for them that collectively they gathered many excellent teachers and thus deserved well of the State. But they were multiplied beyond all reason—a fault they were never able to correct.

Each of these institutions, tied though it was in organization and curriculum to some sect, generally discovered at least one professor or teacher who had the real stuff in him. Such a man, little more at best than a chance discovery, would so send out pupils moved by the desire for



## The People Taught in the School

knowledge that the State would be much benefited by the development within itself of something akin to a high order of educational spirit. There has been much criticism of these small colleges : some of it just but more of it thoughtless, based rather upon a dream of ideal conditions than upon a realizing sense of things as they were.

### THE PEOPLE TAUGHT IN THE SCHOOLS

I HAVE dealt less with details than with the spirit shown by the people who made it their business to develop education on lines that could be maintained. I have not thought it necessary to emphasize the school habits of the time, that is, the barring out of teachers at Christmas; the tendency to inflict corporal punishment for the smallest of human faults, whether mischievous or vicious; the charges, never sustained, of a general incompetence, accusations based upon standards of comparison both unfair and false; the accusations about the supposed ignorance of directors, almost universally due to prejudice, to extravagant expectations, or to a study of bad models; or to the claim that no pupil obtained or was put into the way of obtaining anything like a fair training.

These claims have been preferred throughout the history of popular education as it has been developed in all modern countries during the past four hundred years. They have, indeed, included all branches of education from the higher public schools of England, through the Prussian system, the French *lycées*, down to the hedge schools of Ireland. They illustrate the phases through which a great movement

## Pioneer Foundations

has passed. Persons who wish to investigate them in the relation borne to Pioneer schools by these and other criticisms will obtain much useful information in the line of their demands by a careful reading of Edward Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster*, where genius has been devoted to these bygone issues. The conditions therein delineated had small place in Iowa, and then only as survivals.

A conclusion forced by study and experience is that the one feature missing from the methods in vogue, then as now and perhaps inseparable from any popular system, was the conspicuous absence of the human relation between pupil and teacher. The latter had little time to gain the confidence of the child, to give the encouragement its nature needed, to be gentle and considerate of frailties or failings without which, whatever the quality of instruction, there can be no really wholesome education. Take the teachers, briefly, but I am sure sympathetically described in my account of them!

How could they, living in their own times and surroundings and not in some imagined Utopia, be expected to have either time or motive to cultivate in children that idealism, that consideration for others known to be its highest and most necessary product? They were struggling with themselves, with their times, playing a game in which they were pawns. Here to-day, gone to-morrow; no less narrow in individual training and outlook than in environment; teaching only under almost insuperable difficulties, trying to pump some suggestion of abstract knowledge into the minds of from thirty to fifty children, who were not study-

## The Results Attained

ing from choice but because they were compelled to do so by law, family discipline, or public opinion — the latter always the strongest motive — forced to be learners themselves; working in rude huts, ill-constructed, imperfectly heated, where they were doomed to do much manual work themselves; shuttlecocked from one family into another — all these things, which they could see in their teachers, brought to thousands of brave boys and girls nothing but unpleasant recollections of school as a place wholly disagreeable, practically unrelieved by a gleam of sunshine or a suggestion of cheerfulness. That matters went as well as they did, that children, young and old, had the heart to try to learn is a constant cause of wonder as it is that strong young men, instead of going out as woodmen or ditchers, should have consented to teach school.

### THE RESULTS ATTAINED

DESPITE these drawbacks, disheartening to all concerned and that, too, at a time when the thing called education had less of a purely material quality than at any known time in our history, I feel sure from both experience and knowledge that these schools gave opportunity to the average of the children attending them far beyond their power to use. Such children received instruction in more questions and on broader lines than their poor minds could either absorb at the time or use in later life. It was the child above the average, the one in twenty, seldom at most the more than the one in ten, who suffered. He had to go out into the world with his capacity hobbled and there, with

## Pioneer Foundations

all the drawbacks possible, take his chances of making up for lost time. If he failed, nothing except rude industry and the good honorable citizenship, open to all, was his reward; if in the face of them all he won, then he was pointed to during the most of his life as a self-made man, when indeed he was after all as God had made him because he only used his natural parts, his ingrained character, to do his duty. He had only refused to hide his talent in a napkin. If the mere peeps he had at school helped, so much the better; but they were, very properly, offered freely to the humblest son of Adam's kin who might sit or play by his side.

After all, no educational system, no individual instruction, can be judged by the amount of knowledge acquired. At its best estate much of this is useless lumber; yet, every moment given to it was well spent. These Pioneer teachers at their desks with the pupils sitting before them on their torturing benches were merely adjusting themselves during school and play hours—the latter always the more important and valuable—to life as it lay about them. They were learning how to fit themselves into their little niches, just as much as the college student did then or must do now. The knowledge they gained from books was meagre; there was not one among them who did not absorb daily a hundred raw facts outside of school to one furnished him by the books which studied in his class were so hateful; but discipline, power to work with others, honest and open competition on fair grounds, these did help to complete attainments and character. Because this by-product was

## The Influence of the Newspaper

made in the presence of nature, in the midst of countless difficulties, and made as a mass, it gave the country school a value that its town or city associate never had and never can acquire; even if it has behind it all the rigor or the severe regimenting to be found in the most up-to-date Prussian *realschule*.

But the Pioneer (like any class of people in more settled forms of society) was not dependent upon schools for a large share of that education which makes up the mental equipment of men. He had to learn from everything about him, as all men must do. In addition to inherited qualities, shared by all, he had his own special order in which from necessity he had to perfect himself. These did not inhere in his trades, which were for the most part technical, but required cultivation so that his calling might be made effective for his purposes.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEWSPAPER

MORE directly in line with the ordinary conception of education was the newspaper, then just fairly making headway as a disseminator of knowledge. The chronicle or news circular which recorded bare happenings had gradually been expanded into a medium for matters of general human interest. Its character was that of its day, and yet it was in some respects prophetic of the time when it should in its turn become perhaps the most potent known agent for mental training. Naturally, being a new development, it was of much the same type the country over. It had just escaped from the trammels of the city and had gone into

## Pioneer Foundations

towns and villages. It, therefore, never attained in any one district or State a distinct development of its own; it was part and lot in a universal growth, rapid beyond anything that could have been predicted even by the most watchful or far-seeing.

Almost before a county could be organized some enterprising man would start a local newspaper. There was not only an official or business demand for it as something through which matter of public interest, laws, ordinances, proceedings of boards, land surveys, and the multiplicity of things incident to the newly-organized life might find record, but each one of these new counties was supposed to have a character of its own that must be exhibited to the curious world outside and inside its boundaries.

From the beginning, patronage of the county newspaper became incumbent upon every intelligent man who could afford it. Most of the editors were printers who came with the migration. Some of them had had valuable experience in older States; generally speaking, they were drawn from the people to whom they catered : industrious, self-educated, rather loosely disciplined in mind to begin with; but likely to develop among them some of outstanding character with a power to see what their readers needed and wanted. If they grew beyond the small bulletins of local news, which they were in the beginning, they were frankly almost from necessity imitators of their "cotemporaries" — as they always familiarly called each other — in the cities nearest them and there ran through them then a likeness whatever their size or importance.

## The Influence of the Newspaper

The collection of news was haphazard and unorganized, a fact which of necessity kept them from too great an approach to sameness and enabled their editors to be classified into groups, in each of which there were strong resemblances. Most of these were published weekly. In 1850 there were no dailies in the State; in 1860 the number had grown to nine, with less than eight thousand aggregate circulation; while in 1870, when the State had risen to the eighth place in the Union in population, there were only twenty-two having a total circulation of about seventeen thousand. But at all times the weekly editions of the same papers were not only widely read, according to the standards of the time, but had an influence hardly to be equalled now by papers having ten or twenty times the currency in the matter of numbers.

The one exemplar of American newspapers during this period was the *New York Tribune* under Horace Greeley. This influence not only came from the weekly edition of his paper which before he ran for the Presidency in 1872 had been without question for twenty years the most potent public opinion factor in the political history of the country. It was so able to command imitation that the supply of incipient Greeleys was found everywhere, north, east, west, and even in the south where he was as faithfully imitated as he was cordially hated. The weekly newspaper which, whatever its point of view, could not grind its rival into ashes, send forth unceasing streams of personal abuse, or expose the peccadilloes of its political opponents with a full consciousness that "that sounds like old Horace", would

## Pioneer Foundations

soon lose its subscribers and its chance for the local post office when its party came into power. It was, however, much easier to imitate in these particular points than in vigor of thought, ingenuity of argument, and an independence which nothing could quench.

### IOWA'S NEWSPAPER CONTRIBUTION

IN spite of these weaknesses and difficulties, Iowa could show in Keokuk, Burlington, Muscatine, Davenport, Dubuque, Council Bluffs, and Des Moines among its few dailies, and in Clinton, Iowa City, and Marshalltown, to mention only a few, weeklies of a high order edited by men who whether singly or massed had a strong and merited influence upon public sentiment. They studied and knew their time, they wrote good English and did their duty as they saw it. Their faults were those of the day. Wit, though often present, was sometimes coarse; the humor was often mordant, verging upon horse-play; metaphors were few and when used were likely to become sadly tangled; while irony and sarcasm were rhetorical implements seldom used with safety. In these they but reflected the worst tendencies that lay all about them. They had the virtue of knowing their people, and their devotion to large principles was equally shown in the crisis of war and in their unyielding opposition to the dangerous movements : greenback, silver, prohibition, and others that followed far in its wake. Not one of their editors was even accused of corruption or made himself the tool of men or policies known to be bad and dangerous. Taken as a body and



## Iowa's Newspaper Contribution

a whole, they fitted well into the vigorous formative days of a Commonwealth that they had helped to make into a real force.

One of the features then developed (now almost absent from the modern newspaper) was the excellent literary quality of their selections. Each of the men indicated was his own exchange editor, prouder of his ability to clip judiciously than even of his power to write with vigor. In this, they were again imitators of Horace Greeley, Joseph Medill, George D. Prentice, Wilbur F. Story, Samuel Bowles, Murat Halstead, Richard Smith, Samuel Medary, George L. Miller, John P. Irish, and other leading editors of the time. Books were few; literary tastes were crude and in process of formation; the dark, forbidding theology of other days was disappearing; so that this wide and general dissemination of the best fugitive writing of the time was a real godsend. It would not be extravagant to assert that in the matter of forming a constituency, ready and eager to read with understanding and devotion the best literature of the English language, the newspapers were prior to 1870 the strongest single force. They were seldom sensational, or composed of titbits, or made for children; they appealed, in a serious way, to sober minded, thoughtful men and women. I know that I am right in recognizing them as a potent element among the educational influences that helped to put both Iowa and the Pioneer region of that day among the intelligent and progressive new communities of the country.

The newspaper performed still another function owing

## Pioneer Foundations

to the demand for a wider range of mere news : it carried on almost endless discussions about every sort of question and in all its phases. A new bridge, a change in a State or county road, the organization of a new township, in all of which nothing was done by common consent or without opposition — each was a part of the life about them. Movement was in the air and everybody must know from every source, open or possible, all about the merits or faults of everything proposed. New business ventures, however modest, especially those of a manufacturing or mining nature, were set forth with a fullness no longer possible. These people were hungry for knowledge of the things that could be seen. It was a part of that unsatisfied curiosity which according to travelers became a distinguishing American trait by the end of the 17th century.

In the earlier days, community gossip slowly percolating down through one neighborhood and into another was the only possible way of conveying such information. As the newspaper developed, it was naturally made the vehicle for an order of information that had not hitherto found record in print, and for the discussion by persons widely separated of questions in which they found a common interest. It was an ever broadening force in education and in any review of the times its influence cannot be exaggerated.

### OTHER AGENCIES FOR LEARNING

ANOTHER feature was the debating society which in half the schoolhouses of the West discussed not only the time-

## Other Agencies for Learning

honored abstract questions, but, when it threw off its theological pall, gave its attention to really live issues. The political issues found exponents. The anti-slavery agitation ran mainly under ground; but education, roads, taxes and the right or power to tax, banks and currency, land and its distribution all led in due time to the more practical questions in farming or even in other industries in which this little world took an interest. These came only when some measure of leisure had succeeded — with increased facilities for obtaining information and what is generally called materials became known and available. Then it was that in courageous and young communities the results of education began to make themselves felt.

Even the fads of the time and the so-called fraternal bodies like the Masons, Odd Fellows, and later the Knights of Pythias, had an influence upon the training of both the individual and the mass. The vogue of phrenology and physiognomy — pseudo-sciences which long posed as real — helped to take many of these early people out of the gloom into which they had fallen. There were no local Channings, Furnesses, and Emersons to lead them away from the theological fetishes to which they bowed down in the fond delusion that they were following the religion of Christ. The gulf separating superstition from rationalism was too wide to be jumped without putting in stepping stones or piers. Hence the devices used, though quite unconscious of their character, by those who were ready to accept any way of escape.

Phrenology had passed through many phases in Germany

## Pioneer Foundations

and Austria, after its prophets Gall and Spurzheim had foisted it upon the world and tried to make believe that they had discovered something new and strange as well as true. It soon had its contingent of frauds and fakirs, who were hangers-on, mere imitators of those who really believed in it and to whom it meant something. They early invaded the new settlements, and from 1850 to 1865 had a considerable success in imposing upon a people at once inquiring and discouraged by absorption in an atmosphere of mental aridity so far as the really great questions of human life were concerned. Physiognomy, a modification or offshoot, was soon devised, and though never so important still further tended to arouse the public interest and to fill the schoolhouses everywhere with eager listeners, and to occupy space in the newspapers of the day. They must be numbered among the killed in the Civil War; but not before they had acted as door openers to the scientific study of heredity and other phenomena of nature then hardly known. It would not perhaps be extravagant to say that in some degree these German students were the precursors in the study of mental qualities of Combe, Darwin, Galton, Mendel, Wallace, Whetham, Ellis, Nearing, and other serious-minded students of heredity. "They had their day and ceased to be."

### THE PART THAT NATURE PLAYED

UNDER education it is logical to deal with those influences which nature furnished. These are always present and potent though greatly modified by opportunity and neces-

## The Part That Nature Played

sity. For the city dweller the things of the earth and the air stand less and less in evidence until gradually he almost loses knowledge of them; interest in them declines unless circumstances and surroundings again bring him into new contact with them.

The weather was an important tutor to that human being who, if he was to have any prevision to protect himself, must either know the conditions intuitively or must learn them. So, it was the universal custom of the Pioneer when he rose from his bed, generally long before sunrise, to begin his day's work by a study of the sky with intense interest until he had reached, in his own mind, some general conclusion as to weather probabilities. The possibility of snow, rain, thunder, lightning, fair, clear, or cloudy weather, was to him vital. Relying solely upon his own judgment, he had to make plans not only for the coming day but often, especially in harvest time, for a week ahead. He had no artificial aids, no barometer or thermometer, and no scientific forecast. He consulted the almanac, but faith in its predictions made at random long before in some remote office had disappeared.

From outward signs the direction of the winds, the stillness or movement of the air, the flight of birds, matters which those uninstructed in such lore would never even see, the absence of dew or its extent, the frost and its thickness, all entered into account in reaching an abstract conclusion upon which must be based calculations of the most concrete interest and value to him.

To the city dweller the state of the weather means only

## Pioneer Foundations

more or less comfort or discomfort either of which he must accept as it comes; but for the farmer, especially when he could have no aid but his own judgment from a study of signs in the morning, the work of the day or of many days might depend.

This knowledge of nature, dependent though it was upon individual intuition reinforced by heredity and training, was as much a part of education as learning the alphabet. Such lessons had eliminated the old fears and superstitions. When it was realized that thunder and lightning, the violence of the rain and snow, the devastations of the flood, were not special visitations of Divine wrath or exhibitions of the Devil's power, but that they came in the ordinary, regular working of nature's laws, an advance had been made that opened to the mind innumerable new impressions and ideas.

From a study of the air the sky became an object of interest as well as of wonder. It is not, therefore, surprising that astronomy, the science of the early shepherds, should have proved especially attractive to the Pioneer. The heavens lay spread out before him and even without map or chart he could see in them a mystic meaning even when he could not understand or knew no other constellation than the Great Bear. The smallest clue would so lead him on that the study of the heavens, even with no instrument or teacher to explain, made astronomy the best known of the natural sciences. Studies, although seldom accurate, made by theological writers mainly for the purpose of explaining how even the stars bore out the scrip-

## The Part That Nature Played

tural account of creation did give some idea of the awe and the immensity of the heavens. Now and then a school teacher would have learned something more so that his knowledge though meagre would add to the general stock and lead to the study of astronomical maps which were introduced into the more inquiring families of almost every neighborhood.

It is a mistake to assume that the country boy brought up with nothing but nature all about him, knows little more of it than if he lived in the moon. There were the same individual differences in this respect as in all others; but that was indeed a dull boy who did not learn at least something of the ways of animals, domestic or wild; of birds and insects; of flowers, weeds, trees, the seeds he sowed, or the plants he cultivated; or about the mysteries of roads, paths, streams, springs, wells, rivers, or berry patches and nut-bearing bushes and trees. All these, in their manifold kinships and ramifications having characters of their own with their varying details, were part of the common life and nothing could prevent him from learning something of and from them. He was his own teacher, but he picked up here a curious fact about them or discovered there an interesting trait. Even the man who could not read and write was his willing and often his efficient instructor—he had no other way to learn than through his five senses which in many cases were cultivated to a high pitch.

There was no regular teacher to give him formal lessons in botany, geology, ornithology, or entomology, the speci-

## Pioneer Foundations

mens of which surrounded him everywhere : he may not have been a deep scholar, but even the experts in these sciences might well envy the remarkable gifts, the power of observation, amounting almost to genius, found either in reality or solution in this freckled, barefoot young dweller of the woods or prairies. The yellow primrose order of man is much scarcer than the poet led himself and the world to think.

### THE TRAINING OF THE FIVE SENSES

NOR would it be possible, in considering education, to overlook the high development, almost as perfect as possible in the human being, of the five senses. The keenness of sight that made it vital whether the Indian or the white man should see each other first or farthest, or that revealed the tracks of animals, wild or domestic, ranging from oxen to deer, or even to rabbits or quail, or that could run a furrow as straight as an arrow, with no guide except a peeled stick or a handkerchief tied to a stake a half a mile away, the natural gift for an engineer; the hearing that could detect sound within the remotest circumference from which it could be carried or that could distinguish from all others the faintest sound of a particular bell on the hiding cow, or the click of the wheels on the axle of the family wagon far remote from sight; or that could smell objects not revealed by other senses; or have the delicate and responsive touch that was so useful; or that taste which was trained to suspect or to discover poisonous or noxious elements in food — all these were qualities which, like the



## The Training of the Five Senses

more formal thing known as education, were inherited or acquired, but demanded for their perfection an exercise as constant as that needed to learn the multiplication table, or the spelling or pronunciation of a series of words in that most marvellous of all wonders : a language used by any civilized and highly cultured people.

There has been so much dogmatism about the thing that the world is pleased to term education, so much of cant in its discussion, as to make it profitable once in a while to recall that there are other teachers than those formally trained in a normal school or licensed by a county superintendent, or conveyed by other mediums of knowledge from books, lectures, or systems of philosophy, however learned or intricate they may be. Happily the Pioneer excluded nothing that he could find or hear of that would assist him in the heavy task he had undertaken. He was not satisfied with the natural as it passed before him, but was solicitous to discover and use whatever he felt might help to make easier or more effective a mastery of it. It was only by these processes that he could hope so to develop within himself the powers of mind that would best serve his purpose.

### *SOME OF THE EFFECTIVE RESULTS*

THE formal system of education was crude in the light of the theories of modern pedagogics; but viewed in its effects upon the conditions of the time, in the task of fitting children for their work and duties, its efficiency was probably quite as great as anything we now know. It had little

## Pioneer Foundations

machinery and few artificial aids, less of organization, and almost no centralization or posing. But its teachers had high spirit, sympathy with and knowledge of the people about them, and of their actual needs, and they fitted almost perfectly into their type — something that they both knew and understood. They themselves may have come out of academies, or have picked up what they could in country schools, or by such private instruction as was available, or have studied on their own account — wherever the training came from they pursued their tasks with an honesty, devotion, and freshness of grasp that brought them a large deserved respect and a larger measure of recognition.

Probably of the scattered company of such young men who from 1840 to 1860 spread themselves into the country schools no less than half attained some kind of civil or military recognition during the Civil War. The proportion who succeeded in profession, politics, or business was equally striking until it became almost a byword that those without teaching experience had little chance for success in the hurly-burly of the Pioneer West. And this work was done for six-month terms in the winter at a rate of pay that would now be looked upon as no more than an office boy's pittance!

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